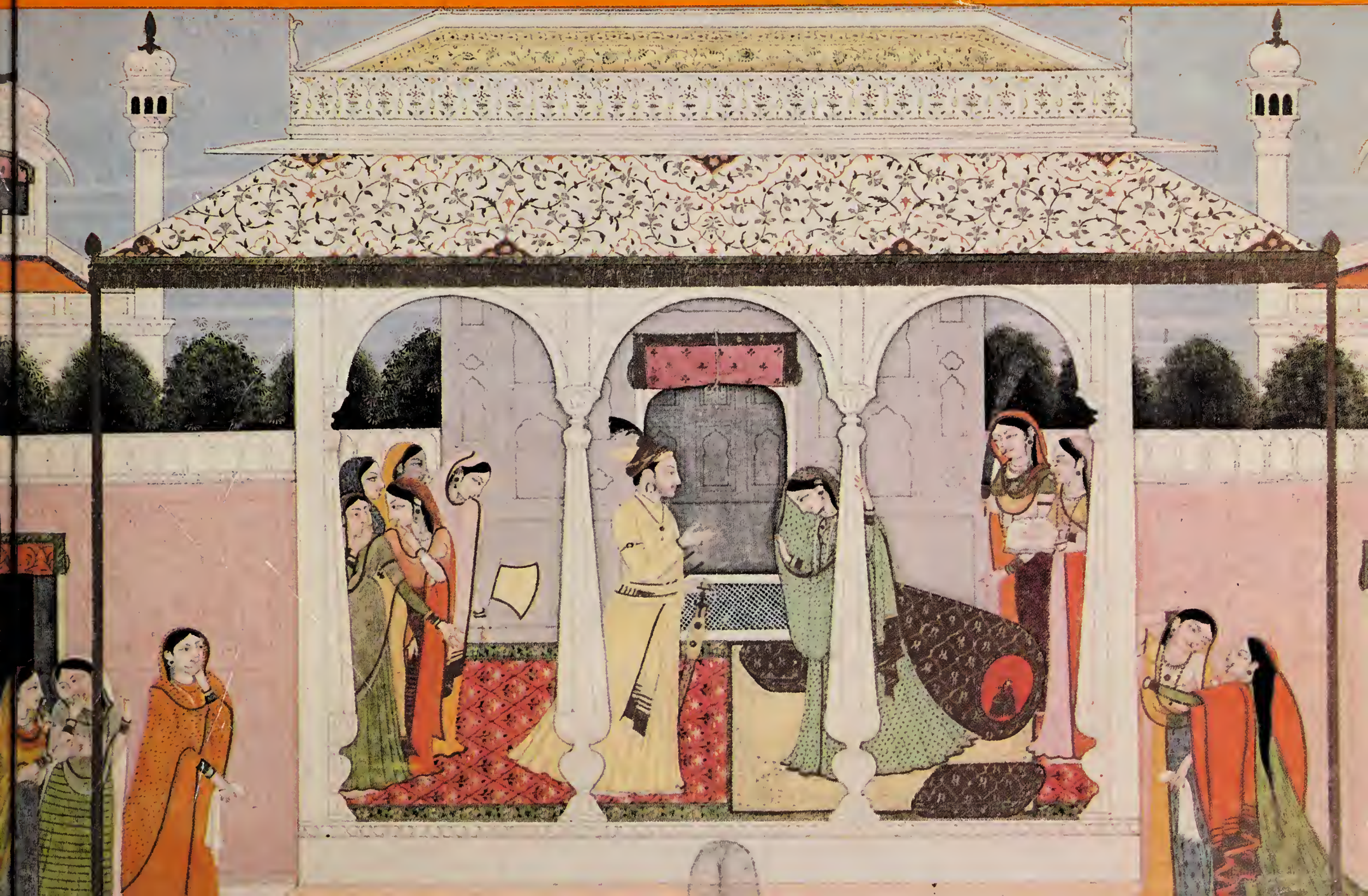
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Pahari Paintings of the Nala-Damayanti Theme

Pahari Paintings of the NALA-DAMAYANTI Theme

IN THE COLLECTION OF DR KARAN SINGH

Essay and Notes
Dr B.N. GOSWAMY

Foreword
Dr KARAN SINGH

PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
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पवित्रमत्रातनुते जगद्युगे स्मृता रसक्षालनयेव यत्कथा
कथं न सा मद्गिरमाविलामपि स्वसेविनीमेव पवित्रयिष्यति।।

"His (Nala's) story, kept in mind, purifies the world in this age, as if by cleansing with water; why will it not purify my speech, which, though crude, is solely devoted to him?"

Naiṣadhacarita, I. 3

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FOREWORD

Ever since the dawn of civilization India has been a major focus of artistic creativity, and down through the ages we have produced some of the greatest works of art known to man. A special feature has been that each region of India at one time or the other, and in one or other of the plastic or performing arts, has made contributions that have enriched the total fabric of Indian art. This fascinating, even bewildering, diversity has been a major feature throughout Indian history, and has greatly enriched the contribution that India has made to world culture. Not only has our artistic expression varied from period to period along the time scale, but within the same historical period different regions have excelled in one or other form of artistic expression. The total impact of the entire process puts India in the first rank of nations who have evoked and concretized the innate human urge for artistic expression in a sustained manner.

The paintings reproduced in this beautiful volume were created in the second half of the 18th century in the Dogra-Pahari region of North India, mainly in what is now Himachal Pradesh. Apart from their martial qualities and rich folklore, the several schools of Pahari art have been a major contribution of the Dogra-Pahari people to the grand mosaic of Indian culture. Professor B.N. Goswamy has with great competence traced the historical and geographical background in which these paintings were produced. I would only add that they combine the beauty and freshness of the mountains with the rare delicacy and grace of the people living in the area.

The quest for beauty and perfection has been one of the earliest signs of civilized man. When, after millions of years of evolution, man was able finally to overcome the basic problem of survival, some mysterious factor within impelled him towards the quest for perfection. Very often this took the form of religious and mystical practices, and indeed a large proportion of art has traditionally been associated in one way or the other with religion. This has been particularly true of India where great religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Islam—have all contributed towards artistic achievement. However, although the basic motivation may be religious, the artist in India has often treated many entirely secular themes within his broader context. The present set of paintings are a remarkable example of the way in which a theme from a great religious classic the *Mahābhārata* as treated in Śrīharṣa's *Naiṣadhacarita* has been represented in a largely secular setting. Nala and Damayantī in these paintings emerge as archetypal lovers in a story full of romance and intrigue, mystery and magic. In the hands of these anonymous artists of two centuries ago the personages and events of the Nala-Damayantī story take on a new significance. Here we see not only the lovers themselves but a large number of individual people portrayed with great feeling, and one wonders whether the artists took for their models actual people living at the time in the courts of the many hill kingdoms. There are also a number of other creatures—elephants and peacocks, deer and domesticated birds—portrayed with an intensity which is quite startling. The whole effect is to transport one into a fascinating miniature world with its own aura and ethos.

The story of how these paintings came into my possession has its own interest. Back in the mid-fifties, when I was

Sadr-i-Riyasat of Jammu & Kashmir, I received a message from Paṇḍit Kunjlal Vaid who lived in Basohli, itself the seat of a former hill kingdom and of one of the major schools of Pahari painting which bears its name. The message said that the Paṇḍit was anxious to see me, but could not undertake the journey to Jammu due to his advanced age and failing health. He, therefore, requested me to visit Basohli as early as possible in order to meet him. I was at Kashmir when I got the message, and the subsequent winter when the Government had moved down to Jammu I decided to visit Basohli. I had been there only once earlier as a boy with my father, and had no clear recollection of the place. I arranged the visit and while I was in the Dak Bungalow Paṇḍit Kunjlal called upon me. Although his health was advanced—he must have been over 80 at the time—his eyes were keen and his speech clear. He met me with great affection and, to my surprise, placed before me a parcel wrapped in a large square handkerchief. He undid the cloth and, one by one, showed me the exquisite paintings with loving care. He said that many foreigners had come to him wanting to buy the collection but he had not agreed to part with it. Now that he was old and had no children, he would like to present the paintings to me. As he put it in Dogri, "these paintings came from the Royal Palace, and it is there that I wish them to return".

I was overwhelmed by his gesture, and deeply moved by the sentiments behind it. I remonstrated with him and said that I could not possibly accept a gift of this nature unless he was prepared to take an adequate price in return. At that his eyes filled with tears. He said that for many generations his family had been deriving sustenance from mine, and that he would under no circumstances accept any payment or remuneration. This put me in somewhat of a quandary. On the one hand I was reluctant to accept the paintings as a present, but on the other I realized that these were a valuable national heritage and that if I did not take them they may well be lost as soon as the Paṇḍit passed away. I decided to accept them. He was overjoyed, asked me to keep them carefully and look at them on hot summer days when they would "cool the heart". Later that year I happened to go South and purchased a sandalwood and ivory walking stick which I sent to the Paṇḍit. It was the only present that he ever accepted from me; a few months later he passed away.

The 47 paintings of the Nala-Damayantī series which are illustrated in this volume brought out by the National Museum form an important part of the Amar Mahal Museum and Library that my wife and I have set up in Jammu. This institution also houses a family portrait gallery, a gallery of modern art, a memorabilia section on my mother, and my own library that I have built up over the last 20 years including a few books that I was able to salvage from those belonging to my father and grandfather. It is my considered view that such collections should not in this day and age remain simply confined to a few individuals. They are a part of our national heritage, and should be made available to a wider public. It is with this in mind that we decided to convert the picturesque building known as Amar Mahal in Jammu, with its magnificent location over-looking the Tawi River and the great triple-peaked mountain of Vaishno Devī, into an

institution which would be of value not only to Jammu but to the entire nation. This will be open to scholars and to the general public, including the large number of tourists who visit Jammu or pass through it to the valley. In due course it is our hope that this Institution, sponsored by the Hari-Tara Charitable Trust that we have created in memory of my parents, will grow in scope and cover a number of scholarly and research activities in the academic and cultural fields. The very first hall displays the Nala-Damayantī series, and I like to feel that the words and the vision of Paṇḍit Kunjlal Vaid have thus been fulfilled. The paintings have come back into the Palace, and the Palace in turn has gone back to the people.

New Delhi
9th March, 1975

Karan Singh

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Words of thanks are inadequate. But I do wish to record here my great indebtedness to Dr Karan Singh whose generosity and enthusiasm have made this work possible. To Dr W.G. Archer, Dr M.S. Randhawa and Shri Rai Krishnadasa I am grateful for much encouragement and detailed advice. Throughout the preparation of this work, I have received friendly help from Shri C. Sivaramamurti, Dr P. Banerjee, Dr C.B. Pandey, Shri J.C. Gupta, Shri O.P. Sharma, Shri G.M.N. Sahay, Dr Brahma Dutt, Shri Neamatullah Shah and Shri Amrik Singh. In the matter of translating the Sanskrit text, Paṇḍit Kedar Nath Ji Shastri and Paṇḍit Gauri Shankar have spared for me much valuable time and I have received help in other ways from Shri Hargopal Jhamb, Kumari Ritu Luthra, Shri K.C. Kaistha and Shri Jagjit Singh. Shri Chandu Lal, Sardar Ram Kumar and Paṇḍit Hari Bilas gave me kind access to their records and to my wife, Dr Karuna Goswamy, I owe gratitude for her help and support throughout my work on this book.

A considerable part of the information contained in this work was gathered by me during the tenure of my Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship and to the Trustees of the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund I wish to offer my gratitude. The comparative photographic material included in the present book I owe to the kindness of the Directors of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland; the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington; the Victoria & Albert museum, London; the National Museum, New Delhi; the Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh; the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benares; and the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay.

Chandigarh B.N.G.
28th January, 1972

TEXT ILLUSTRATIONS

The text illustrations are taken from works, or details of works, in the following collections:

Figs. 1, 3, 4, 5, 10, 12, 13, 16, 17, 21, 40, 41, 43, 45, 48, 50, 75—National Museum, New Delhi; figs. 2, 5(a), 14, 15, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27(a), 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 44, 46, 47, 49, 53, 54, 56, 58, 60, 61, 62, 68 72,—Karan Singh Collection; fig. 6—Asiatic Society of Bombay; figs. 7, 8,—Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay; fig. 9—Victoria & Albert Museum, London; figs. 11, 37, 57—Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; figs. 19, 71, 73—Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benares; figs. 20, 27, 51, 55, 59, 63, 64—Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh; fig. 42—Freer Gallery of Art, Washington; figs. 65, 66, 67—private collection; fig. 69—*bahī* of Sardar Ram Rakha, Haridwar; fig. 70—*bahī* of Shri Hari Bilas, Kurukṣetra; fig. 74—Central Museum, Lahore



Pahari Paintings of The Nala-Damayanti Theme

Somewhere, among the many concerns of the Indian artist, there is also a concern with reaching the ultimate in the expression of delicacy of feeling. There are periods in which there is even a conscious search for the extreme: the idea becomes something of a gentle passion. One sees it in that inaudibly soft but clearly articulated note of music that trembles in the air for but a brief moment before it gets merged in the body of a *rāga*. One sees it as Kṛṣṇa massages the feet of Rādhā with the tenderest rose flower and as Rādhā puts out her hand to stop him, for its touch she says is too coarse for the soles of her feet. One sees it again in the poet bending down to hear the *caṭaka*, that delicate whisper of sound that the bud makes as it spreads out its petals in the fugitive moment of blossoming. One sees it also in the wispy softness of line in paintings like those in this book in which the brush seems barely to touch the surface, and forms look as if they have been 'breathed' upon paper.

This delicacy is not something with which things begin; it often comes at the end of a long search. And then when it has been achieved, it never stays there for very long. Almost too soon, it begins to degenerate into a manner. The moment of creativity is followed by a period of imitation in which there is both escape and decadence. But the important thing to do is to see and enjoy what is produced in that high moment and to distinguish it carefully from that comes after, and is its counterfeit.



Fig. 1. Gaṇeśa, Pahari, 18th century. National Museum



Fig. 2. Invisible Nala in Damayanti's apartments (detail)



II

The beginnings of Pahari painting, obscure and uncertain as they are, are characterized by work of great boldness. From every centre in the hills in the seventeenth century, Basohli, Mankot, Nurpur, Chamba, Mandi, Bilaspur, we have paintings that burn with a certain intensity. Colours are hot, gestures vibrant, compositions daringly simple. A strange energy informs almost everything from royal portraits to visual interpretations of rhetoric poetry. This energy is there for it seems to belong to the age: the history of this entire period in the hills is peopled with characters cast in the heroic mould; or it comes perhaps from the folk roots of the art in which there is honesty and directness and a singular lack of sophistication.

In the eighteenth century things begin to change, though not for the first twenty years or so. Then, influences, including those from the Mughal centres of painting, start coming in; the hills begin opening up; and that fierce energy begins to lose its grip. A period of experimentation begins in which a synthesis of the early, almost abstract, approach to painting with a new tendency towards naturalism is attempted. The 'style of Basohli'—that is the name which is generally given to the early work from the hills (and which serves a purpose as long as the *style* is not identified or confused with the *style* of that name)—yields place to a 'style' (sometimes called early Guler, sometimes pre-Kangra) that is at once experimental and pragmatic. Some distinguished work is produced in this 'style' in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, and some tendencies become established. Painting begins to lean on the side of naturalism; a lyrical, romantic quality comes into it; and that search for delicacy of feeling, of which we have spoken above, begins.

It is in the second half of the eighteenth century that this search succeeds. A style of great refinement and elegance comes into being and the painter shows, more than ever before, interest in works of classical poetry, both Sanskrit and Hindi, for they give him all the opportunity to turn lyrical and to parallel the poet's creation with his own. It is not only in the States of Kangra and Guler (with which this style is generally, though perhaps erroneously, identified) that this tendency in this gentle and luxuriant style, comes about. To the Epics and Paurāṇic texts and Rāgamālās and familiar works of poetry which were always favoured by the Pahari painter, new texts are added. At this stage the patron, the learned paṇḍits at the court, the painter, all seem to combine to accomplish this. One of the 'new' texts that is now chosen for illustration, at least at one court, treats of the ancient and moving story of Nala and Damayantī.



Fig. 3. Detail, Gīta Govinda, 1730



Fig. 4. Detail, Bhāgavata Purāṇa, c. 1750



Fig. 5. Detail, Bhāgavata Purāṇa, c. 1780



III

In the 'Vanaparvan' of the *Mahābhārata*, there is a long well-known episode that is given the name of the 'Nalopākhyāna'. Yudhiṣṭhira, with his brothers and with Draupadī, is in the forest of Kāmyaka, in exile from his kingdom. Arjuna has gone to the regions of indra to obtain divine arms and Yudhiṣṭhira goes over in his mind the events of the last years: the loss of his kingdom, the misfortunes of the family one after the other and, now, the separation of the brothers from Arjuna. A flood of grief passes over him on this account. Bhīma makes a brave effort at consoling noble Yudhiṣṭhira. He also presses upon him the need for meeting the deceit of Duryodhana by deceit, for surely that is permitted by *dharma*. He fears, and tells his elder brother so, that if Duryodhana now discovers them in the period of *ajñātavāsa,* living incognito, he will again call Yudhiṣṭhira to a game of dice and, "being again called to dice, we shall once again be vanquished" hears Bhīma out, but resolutely refuses to take recourse to deceit. At this point, the great sage Bṛhadaśva arrives in their hermitage and seeing the equable son of Dharma in this disturbed state of mind, attempts of offer solace. This situation will not last for ever, he says, and what it demands it not despair but fortitude. He then tells Yudhiṣṭhira of another great and noble king who had, likewise, suffered at the hands of 'outrageous fortune', losing his entire kingdom at the throw of dice. This interests Yudhiṣṭhira, and he begs the sage to tell him the story of that king. Bṛhadaśva then narrates the story of Nala, king of Niṣadha.

The story begins with telling of the love of Nala and Damayantī, and a golden swan who acted as messenger

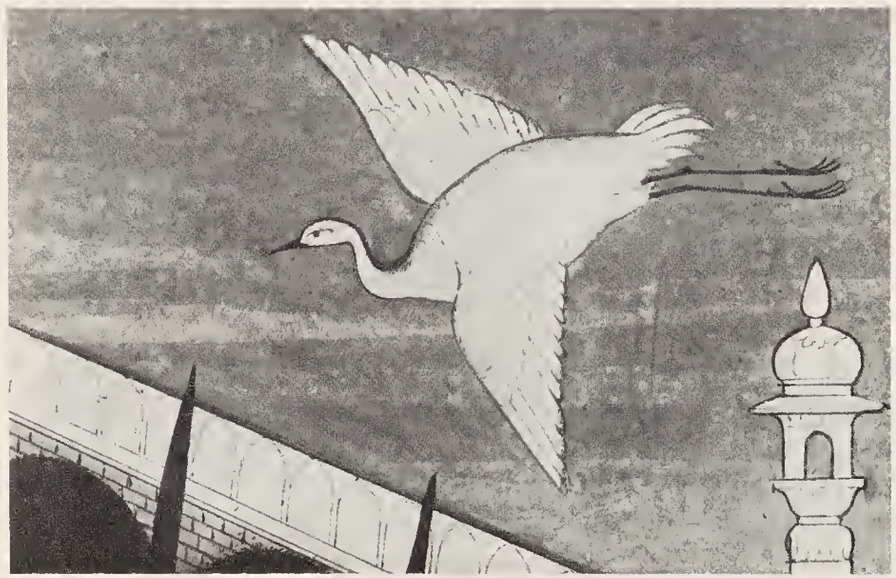


Fig. 5(a). The Golden Swan returns (detail). Karan Singh Collection

between them; then it goes on to the *svayaṁvara* arranged by Damayantī's father, king Bhīma of Vidarbha and the flocking together of kings and guardians of all quarters to that *svayaṁvara*, for the fame of Damayantī's beauty and of the nobility of the house of Bhīma had reached far and wide. Then follow passages in which the gods themselves, viz. Indra, Agni, Varuṇa and Yama, anxious to win the hand of Damayantī in the *svayaṁvara,* make Nala their messenger to her to plead their case, but to no avail: Damayantī chooses Nala alone in the *svayaṁvara*, but not before the gods have played upon her a ruse, each assuming the form of Nala himself. The dilemma of Damayantī is eventually

resolved through her humility, for she prays the gods to assume their real form which they do, upon being convinced that Damayantī will not choose anyone else but Nala. The marriage of Nala and Damayantī then takes place and they live for many years in felicity. But then, one day, the evil god of the Iron Age, Kali, who had vowed to avenge himself upon Nala for having married Damayantī whom he himself darkly lusted after, enters the body of Nala and the entire tenor of Nala's life changes. He, the most virtuous and the most noble of men, falls prey to common weaknesses. In a fatal game of dice he loses everythings to Puṣkara, his brother; Nala and Damayantī both have to go in exile and are there separated by unliked fate. Each goes through the severest trials but eventually Damayantī reaches her father's place. Nala, with Kali raging through his blood, has yet to suffer more. He becomes misshapen and dark after an encounter with Karkoṭaka, the serpent, then takes up employment as a charioteer with king Ṛtuparṇa from whom, however, he learns the secret of throwing dice. After long trials he and Damayantī are united, Kali is ejected out of Nala's body, and Nala regains his kingdom by engaging his brother in yet another game of dice in which he wins all.

This *upākhyāna*, involved as it is but told in very moving words, is then rounded up by the sage Bṛhdaśva by saying that the mere hearing of this story is productive of much merit.

"Karkoṭakasya nāgasya Damayantyā Nalasya ca
Ṛtuparñasya rājarṣe kīrtanaṃ Kali nāśanam."[1]

"Reciting the story of Karkoṭaka, the serpent, of Damayantī and Nala, and of the royal sage, King Ṛtuparṇa, is the destroyer of the evil effects of Kali."

This story has exercised a strange fascination over the Indian mind. As a legend, it gets referred to even in the *Rāmāyaṇa.*[2] There is mention of it in the *Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā* and in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. It occurs in many of the *Purāṇas:* the *Padma*, the Linga, the *Vāyu*, The *Matsya*, the *Brahmāṇḍa*, the *Harivaṁśa*. It is told with much relish and in great detail in texts like the *Bṛhatkathā,* the *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī,* and the great and well known *Kathāsaritsāgara*. But above all, it has intrigued and attracted generations of poets who have turned to the story alike in poetry and drama, in Sanskrit, Prakrit, Gujarati, Marathi, even Persian. In these works Nala and Damayantī are referred to by slightly varying names or epithets, but the substance of the story remains the same. The *Nalacampū* of Trivikrama Bhaṭṭa, the *Naiṣadhānanda* of Kṣemeśvara, the *Davadantīkathā* of Jinasāgara Suri, the *Nalābhyudaya* of Vāmana Bhaṭṭa, the *Nalarāmāyaṇa* of Rājaśekhara, the *Bhaimīpariṇaya* of Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita, all centre around Nala and Damayantī. We come right into the twentieth century with versions of the Nala story like the great Kathakali performance of it taken all over the world recently by the Kerala Kalāmaṇḍalam. But the most famous of the poems on Nala, after the 'Nalopākhyāna' of the *Mahābhārata* upon the early part of which it is clearly based, remains the great *kāvya* of the twelfth century, the *Naiṣadhacarita,* sometimes simply called the *Naiṣadha,* by Śrīharṣa.

In India, what fascinated the poet often also moved the painter. In painting the story of Nala and Damayantī has come in for considerable attention as much because of its



Fig. 6. Leaf from the Mahābhārata. A.D. 1516



Fig. 7. Leaf from Nala-Damayanti Ms. Popular Mughal, 17th century

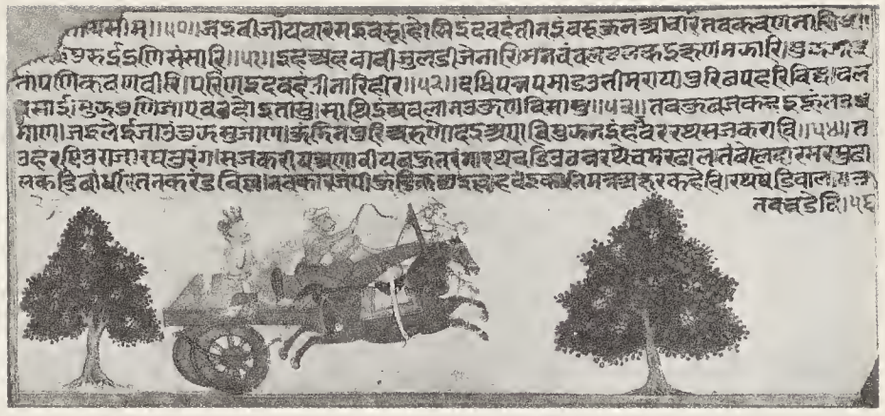


Fig. 8. Leaf from Nala-Damayanti Ms. Popular Mughal, 17th century



Fig. 9. Leaf from Nala-Damayanti set. Pahari, Bilaspur(?). Victoria and Albert Museum

being the theme of literary texts which the painter was so fond of illustrating, as because of intense human interest. Among the earliest and very detailed representations of the *Kathā* of Damayantī and Nala was the manuscript based on the *Nalacampū* of Trivikrama Bhaṭṭa and painted in the Gujarati style in the first quarter of the fifteenth century.[3] The story of Nala, from the 'Vanaparvan', is found in an illustrated *Mahābhārata* manuscript of A.D. 1516, now in the Asiatic Society of Bombay;[4] an illustrated Gujarati version of the story, the *Nala Davadantī Rāsa,* comes from the 17th century.[5] There is again a joint illustrated manuscript of Nala-Damayantī and Mādhavānala-Kāmakandalā, painted in what has been called the Popular Mughal style, from the 17th Century.[6] From the 17th century also comes a Persian manuscript of *Nal Daman* painted in the Deccani style and noticed by scholars at some length before.[7]

From the Pahari area, again, we find decided interest on the part of different painter-families in the story. In the Victoria and Albert Museum in London there are several paintings of a Nala-Damayantī set, done perhaps in Bilaspur in the 18th century.[8] Five leaves of what must have been an extensive set of drawings of the Nala-Damayantī story, done in the style that we associate with the artist Sajnu of Kangra, are in the National Museum at Delhi.[9] But by far, and deservedly, the most well known series treating of the story in Pahari painting, perhaps in the whole of Indian painting, has been one of 48 drawings, twentynine of which are in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.[10] Attention to these, like to many other things to which we now devote hopefully learned volumes, was first drawn by Ananda Coomaraswamy in 1910 when he published some of these in his *Indian Drawings.*[11] Dr Coomaraswamy wrote of these incredibly refined drawings with much fondness and later published all the 29 of these belonging to the Museum in his *Catalogue,*[12] Part V. There were other drawings, also originally in the Coomaraswamy collection, in public and private collections in America and the entire series was published from Boston in full by A. C. Eastman in a monograph, *The Nala-Damayantī Drawings,*[13] in 1959. In the National Museum at Delhi also are a large number of drawings of the Nala-Damayantī theme besides those in the Sajnu style. One hundred and ten of them belong to one series;[14] twelve, more finished but still not painted,[15] belong to another. Finished paintings of the Nala-Damayantī theme, occurring in single leaves,[16] have also occasionally come up for notice. The most important of the *painted* material, and that which has come to light the most recently, is the set of fortyseven paintings in the Karan Singh collection to which this volume for the most part is devoted.[17]

The complete story of Nala and Damayantī as given in the *Mahābhārata* is not illustrated in its entirety, however, in any of the sets that have survived from the Pahari area. Our belief thus far was that even that portion of the story which Śrīharṣa makes his theme in the *Naiṣadhacarita* had not received full treatment in a Pahari set, for the Coomaraswamy drawings which formed the largest group began only with the *svayaṁvara* of Damayantī. Thus, even if the story in them was continued to the point where the *kāvya* ends, with long descriptions of love-play of the couple, and their singing the praises of the moon, the first half of the story had not been



Fig. 10. Drawing from Nala-Damayanti set, Pahari, Style of Sajnu, 19th century

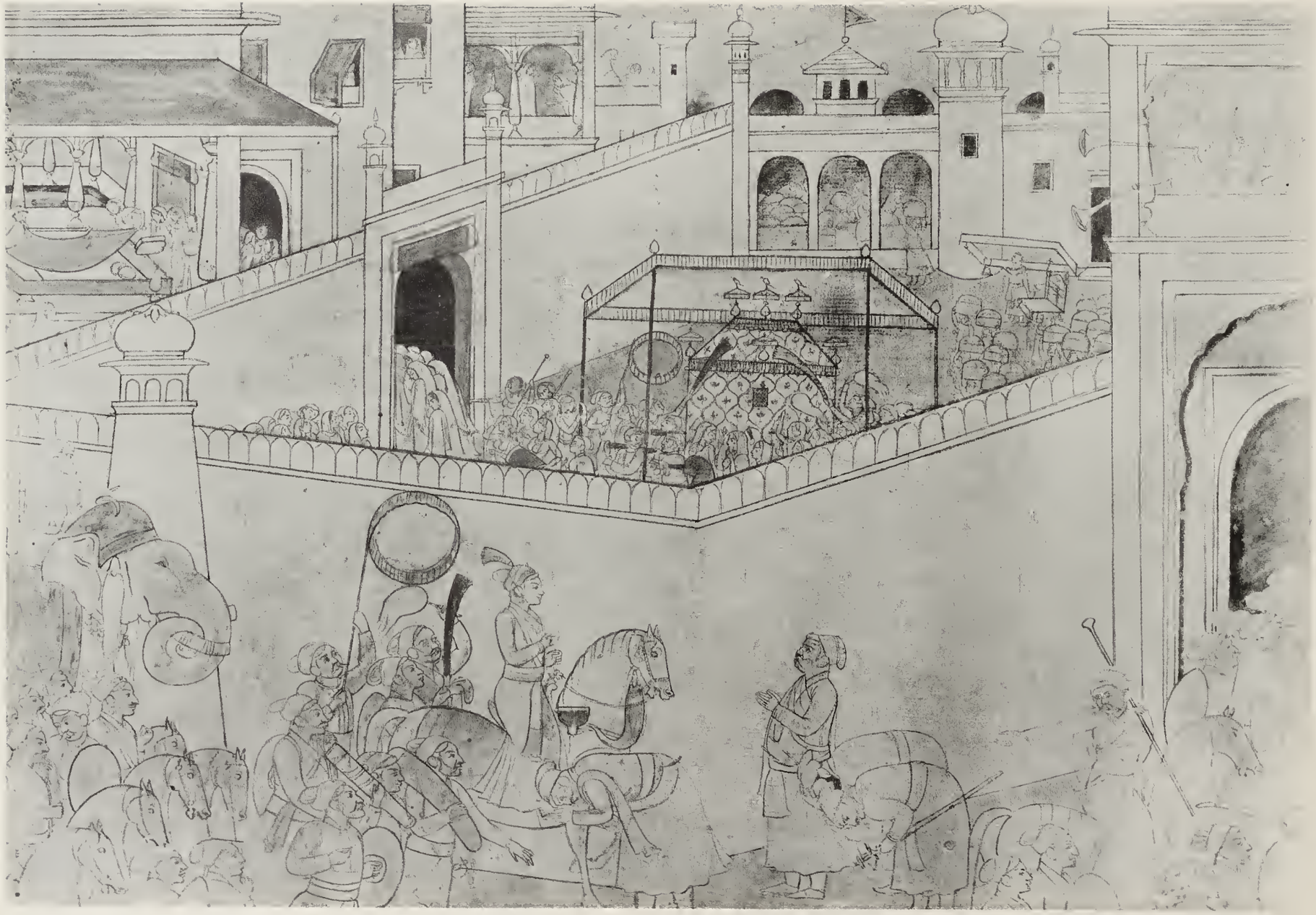


Fig. 11. Nala returns after his marriage. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

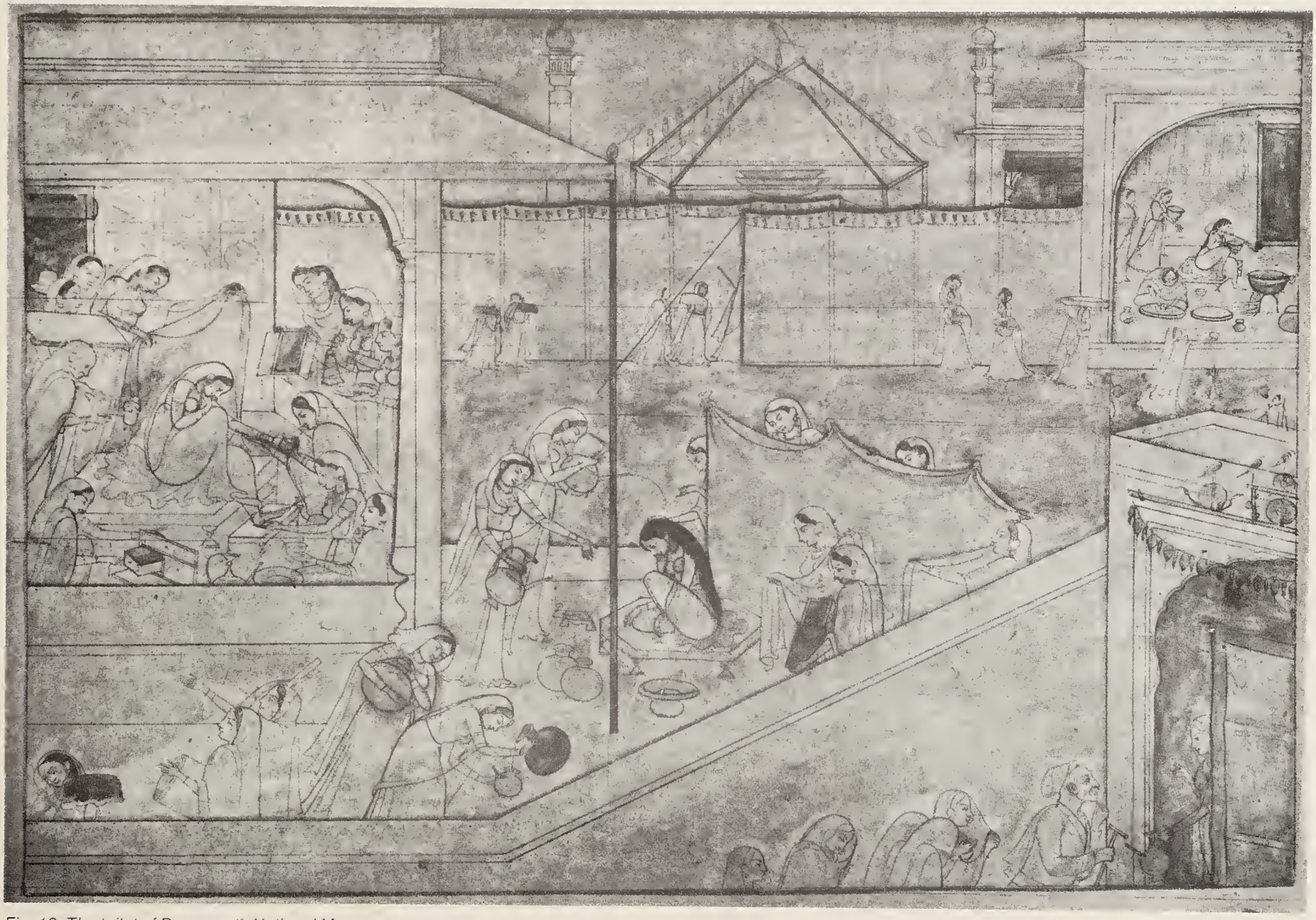


Fig. 12. The toilet of Damayanti, National Museum

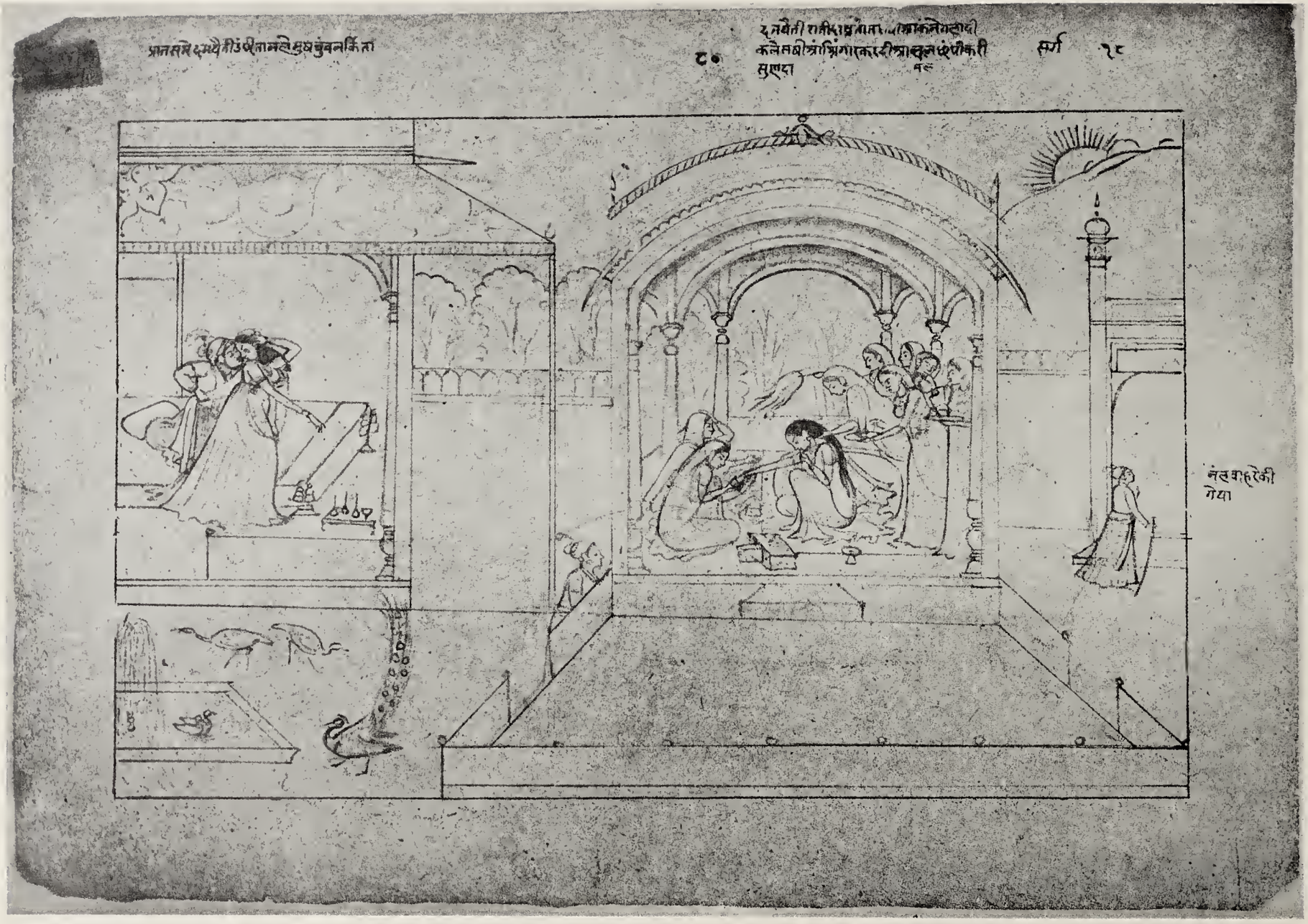


Fig. 13. Damayanti's toilet after the nuptial night. Sanguine drawing, National Museum

touched at all. That half, interestingly enough, is the theme of the Karan Singh paintings as we know them now. In fact, the Karan Singh paintings, after visually narrating the love of Nala and Damayantī, the episode of the 'golden swan' and the mission of Nala on behalf of the gods, bring the story precisely up to the point where the Coomaraswamy drawings take it up, namely the gathering of the princes for the *svayaṁvara*. The two 'sets' then—they are really two parts of the same set, as we shall see later, even stylistically: the first fully painted, the second drawn and primed and ready for painting—cover the entire story of Nala and Damayantī as given in the *Naiṣadhacarita.* This is also done, we now know, by another set, the set of sanguine drawings in the National Museum; but those drawings are again intimately, even casually, connected with the Karan Singh and Coomaraswamy set. That is a matter to which, however, we will return later.

Of the relationship of the Coomaraswamy drawings (the Karan Singh paintings were then not in the picture) with a specific text, not much was known to begin with. Only the story was identified as that of Nala and Damayantī by Dr Coomaraswamy when he first published these drawings. But it was evident to him that in their details the drawings did not follow the text of the 'Nalopākhyāna' in the *Mahābhārata.* "The story illustrated obviously is not the Sanskrit version of the *Mahābhārata,*" he wrote,[18] "as the pictures after the marriage do not present the subsequent events, such as the gambling scene, adventures in the forest, etc., but merely describe the whole life of the young lovers." But it was not long before Dr Coomaraswamy was able to identify the text. This happened in 1934 when K.K. Handiqui published his English translation of the *Naiṣadhacarita* of Śrīharṣa. We do not have a record of what Dr Coomaraswamy himself thought or wrote on the subject, but we have the evidence of Dr Handiqui. In an article[19] which he published in the *Indian Historical Quarterly* in 1936, he said that it was not generally known that the Nala-Damayantī drawings published earlier represented scenes from the *Naiṣadhacarita.* "We owe this information to Dr A.K. Coomaraswamy," he wrote, "for in his communication concerning our translation of *Naiṣadhacarita* he points out that the series closely follow Śrīharṣa's text and ends, like the poem, with the moonrise scenes." In the preface of the second edition of his translation of *Naiṣadhacarita,*[20] Dr Handiqui again acknowledged his debt to Dr Coomaraswamy while thanking him for offering suggestions regarding the translation which "I have adopted in the present revision." Dr Handiqui had, in his 1936 article, succeeded in establishing a clear relationship between the text of Śrīharṣa and some of the drawings which had by then been published. This work was, however, done in much more detail and with great precision by A.C. Eastman first in his preliminary essay in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* and then in his *Nala-Damayantī Drawings* where, with remarkable patience, he related each individual drawing to one or more verses from the *Naiṣadhacarita.* By now there remained little doubt that it was not the 'Nalopākhyāna' in the *Mahābhārata,* nor any other version like the *Nalacampū* of Trivikrama Bhaṭṭa which had provided the text for these drawings. The *Naiṣadhacarita* was clearly established as the source.[21]

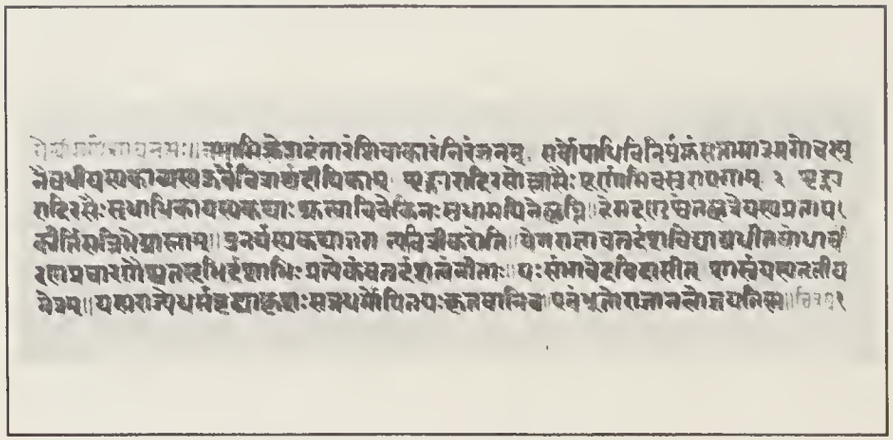


Fig. 14. Text on reverse of first painting. Karan Singh Collection

Further confirmation of this is now available from the inscription which occurs on the first painting in the Karan Singh collection. This inscription, like others in this set, is not at the back of the painting, as was often the case, but is written in a neat hand, in Devanāgarī script, in black ink, on a flap or fly-leaf[22] pasted to the picture, which serves both as a dust-cover and as space for inscribing. The inscription begins, appropriately, with a eulogy of Gaṇeśa: *Aum̐ Śrī Gaṇeśāya namaḥ,* and then states other facts. This can be rendered in English thus:

"Aum̐. Salutation to Gaṇeśa. I bow to the destroyer of affliction, who is of auspicious appearance, who is unstained, free from all attributes, and is an abstraction beyond the cognisance of senses.

"I am writing this *Citrārthadīpikā,* (a commentary, lit. "a lamp for illustrating the meaning of the paintings") of the poetical composition, the *Naiṣadhīya.* Like the celestial river, Gaṇgā, it is full of the delights of the sentiments of love."

The *Naiṣadhacarita,* or *Naiṣadhīya* as it is here called, is then clearly the *kāvya* to which these paintings relate; and the commentary which is here used in the inscriptions is the *Citrārthadīpikā.* This is not a standard commentary on the *Naiṣadhacarita,* like the *Dīpikā* of Cāṇḍu Paṇḍit.[23] The only thing the writer of this text is intent upon doing is explaining the relationship of the paintings of Śrīharṣa's verses; in a sense he is interpreting the purport, *bhāva,* of the verses for the painter and that of the paintings for us.

The authorship of this *Citrārthadīpikā* is not known

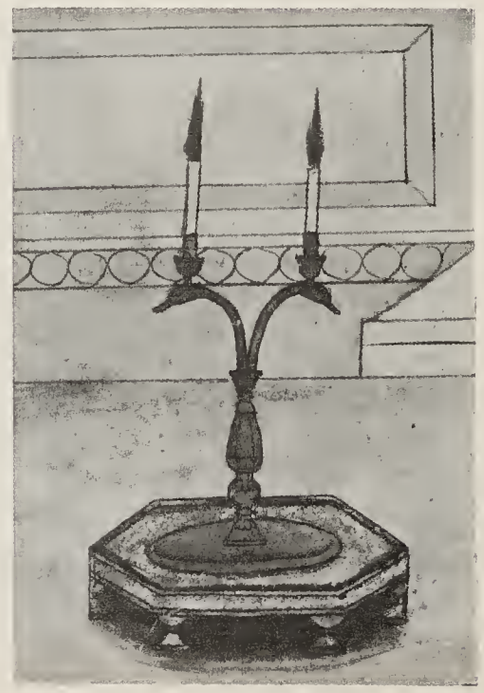


Fig. 15. Detail from Plate 23

but this is no true loss, for it is not a great composition, nor even a significant 'commentary'. If anything, it has faults enough to remind one of the epigram that if such faults survived even after the thoroughness with which the great Pāṇini had laid down the rules of grammar in his *Aṣṭādhyāyī,* it must have been only by lurking in the mouths of *bhāṭs* and *jyotiṣīs*![24] In fairness to the writer, however, it must be said that his task like that of the painter, was none too easy, for both of them had to try and keep pace with the swift flights of Śrīharṣa. There are places where nearly a whole canto of verse has been illustrated by only one painting and the words of Śrīharṣa condensed into a passage only of the length that could be accommodated on its fly-leaf. This happens especially in paintings in which a long conversation occurs, like that between Nala and Damayantī when Nala comes as messenger of the gods. The poet, in the original text, lingers lovingly and long over this, but the artist condenses the sequence into four paintings and the *paṇḍit* has to confine himself to describing the gist of the conversation on the fly-leaves of these four paintings.



IV

It is necessary, before examining the paintings and the questions they raise, to have a close look at the *mahākāvya* of Śrīharṣa which they, together with the drawings, illustrate. This, because it is *through* the *Kāvya* that these paintings and drawings are best approached. The text is not important for the understanding of the story. That story is briefly told, and the point of each painting can be taken without the aid of that considerable work. But if these paintings have to be related to the *kāvya* it is because they have to be seen *in its terms.* Without an understanding of the ethos, the flavour, of the *Naiṣadhacarita,* the understanding of these paintings, at least their enjoyment, can remain only imperfect.

The *Naiṣadhacarita* is a highly controversial work; it has received both inordinate praise and fairly straight condemnation.[25] For many centuries, the work has been clearly regarded as one of the *Pañca-mahākāvyas* of Sanskrit literature. It has been described as the last great *kāvya* of a great language, and is regarded as one of the group popularly called the *bṛhattrayī,* a trio of major works, in which the *Kirātārjunīya* of Bhāravi and the *Śiśupālavadha* of *Māgha* are counted besides it. At least one popular saying concerning it has been repeated across the centuries:[26]

उदिते नैषधे काव्ये क्व माघः क्व च भारविः ?

"Once the *Naiṣadhakāvya* was composed, who cared for Māgha or for Bhāravi?" The reference obviously is to that well known Sanskrit *subhāṣita* in which four great Sanskrit writers are celebrated for what is best associated with them, but in which Śrīharsa finds no mention:

उपमा कालिदासस्य भारवेरर्थगौरवम्
दण्डिनः पदलालित्यं माघे सन्ति त्रयो गुणाः।।

"For simile, Kālidāsa; for subtlety of meaning, Bhāravi; for choice of diction, Daṇḍin; but in Māgha are there all the three virtues present." The verse on the *Naiṣadha* that we have just quoted is encountered in all literature touching upoṇ Śrīharṣa; it places Śrīharṣa above both Māgha and Bhāravi, but, modestly and by implication, directly below Kālidāsa whose supremacy is unquestioned. In the view of at least one serious critic[27] who compares Śrīharṣa with Latin poets, in his glowing descriptions of the passions and particularly the passion of love, he resembles Ovid; in the easy flow of his language he is Virgil's equal or perhaps superior; in the variety of his metres and moral reflections, he competes with Horace; while in pomp of expression, diversity of imagery and minuteness of delineation he far exceeds them all.

Opposed firmly to this, however, is the other opinion which speaks of the "stifling scholarship" of Śrīharṣa and of his verbal gymnastics. He is accused of mistaking cleverness for inspiration and technical virtuosity for poetic gift. His work has been described[28] as "a perfect masterpiece of bad taste and bad style," "disgusting to persons of refined taste, or religious sentiments." To class the *Naiṣadhacarita* with the masterpieces of Kālidāsa, Bhāravi, and even Māgha, in this view,[29] is "to betray an ignorance of the difference between poetry and its counterfeit."

But, in fairness, the *Naiṣadhacarita* of *Śrīharṣa* must be understood against the background of the entire legend that has grown up around it and its author.[30] The source of much of the information on Śrīharṣa is Rājaśekhara,[31] but there is also some information in the work itself about Śrīharṣa's

parentage, about the other works which he wrote, and even his own opinion of himself and his work. But more than anything else it is the accumulation of the anecdotes about Śrīharṣa which contribute to the formation of the hard core of the legend about him which one comes upon again and again. The legend is important not because of the veracity of any particular incident concerning Śrīharṣa or one of his works, but because of the fact that the point of all the stories around Śrīharṣa's name is consistently to prove the great *pāṇḍitya,* scholarship, of the man. Even in the most casual incidents of his life as described in the legend we get a clear reflection of this bias. Śrīharṣa, it is said, was the son of Śrīhīra, a great paṇḍita, and Māmalladevī. Śrīhīra was a poet at the court of Kānyakubja, but he was defeated in a scholarly duel, *śāstrārtha*, by another poet whose name is given often as Udayanācārya. Śrīhīra, at this, charged his son with the task of avenging him on his rival. Śrīharṣa then went away, acquiring knowledge ceaselessly and learning from every possible *ācārya*, and concentrating on the *cintāmaṇi mantra* till he felt confident enough to return to the court of his father's erstwhile patron. In the story that is told of his return, Śrīharṣa recites, at the very moment of his entry into the court, some verses in the *śleṣālaṅkāra,* pregnant with many meanings which convince both the King and Udayanācārya that a greater master indeed than Udayana had arrived. This was sufficient for the King to replace Udayana *Paṇḍit* by Śrīharṣa. From then on at that court the supremacy of Śrīharṣa began. Śrīharṣa is then said to have produced a great many works including the abstruse *Khaṇḍanakhaṇḍakhādya*, but the epitome of his learning was this *mahākāvya, the Naiṣadhacarita.* The story goes that the King wanted the poet to go to Kashmir to have his work approved from Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning, who presided there is person. Śrīharṣa then went to Kashmir and received Sarasvatī's blessings but not before a learned argument event with her.

Reaching the court of the King of Kashmir was not however as easy as it was to reach the goddess. The jealousy of the local scholars and poets kept Śrīharṣa from coming to the notice of the monarch. But then, one day, alone and downcast, Śrīharṣa was seated by the side of a well when there came two women to fetch water. They began quarrelling soon, but in a language which Śrīharṣa could not understand. The quarrel grew in magnitude and eventually was taken to the court of the King for settlement. The King could not decide the case without evidence and wanted to know if there was a witness. The women mentioned that there was only one man seated there. That man, Śrīharṣa, was looked for, eventually found, and questioned by the King. He admitted to his presence on the scene, but said that he could not comprehend the nature of the quarrel because he was not familiar with the language in which it had been conducted. But, he added, if it was of any use he could reproduce literally and exactly all that he had heard. This he did without knowing a word of the language, and purely from the memory of the sounds he had heard. This remarkable feat greatly impressed the ruler of Kashmir who became anxious to know the name and origin of this man and, upon knowing that he was Śrīharṣa sent by the King of Kānyakubja, chided his own *paṇḍits* for keeping Śrīharṣa from reaching him and paid him much homage.

We have other stories also. Śrīharṣa returned to Kānyakubja, loaded with honours from Kashmir, but managed to fall foul of a newly-married and conceited wife of the king. There was a battle of wits between him and the new queen in which Śrīharṣa again triumphed but, the story says, these incidents filled him with such disgust that he left Kānyakubja and went to live in Varanasi as a recluse.

Śrīharṣa gives his own view of himself in the concluding verses of the various cantos of the *Naiṣadhacarita.*[32] Doubt has been cast on the authenticity of some of these, especially of the verses which conclude the *Kāvya*[33] at the end of canto XXII (152-155). But even if they were not a part of the original poem and are later interpolations by disciples or other *paṇḍits,* they do not come as a surprise because the tenor of the statements in these verses, especially at the end, is wholly in consonance with the image of Śrīharṣa that emerges from his legend. Consistently and throughout the poem one hears of the virtues of the work, and one is prepared when the last verse describes the work as being from the pen of Śrīharṣa, who was "the recipient of the honour of being favoured with two betel leaves by the ruler of Kānyakubja, who was entitled to a seat of honour in the court, who was capable of realizing the *brahmānanda* through a *Samādhi* which is indescribable, whose poetry is sweet as honey, whose powers of argumentation are such that all rivals are disheartened by them." At another place, Śrīharṣa describes his work as "the great ocean itself from the womb of which the fourteen *ratnas* such as nectar are born" and compares it with the works of other poets which are like little hillocks from which flow tiny streams that dry up in but two days or four. Quite obviously, even if these descriptions are later insertions, they hold an honest mirror to the enormous conceit of the man, his great pride in the fact that in learning he was superior to any contemporary, and in skill in argument a match for anyone who ever lived. The person who emerges from these verses is the self-same Śrīharṣa of whom it is said that when he had gone in quest of knowledge prior to his return to court of Kānyakubja for defeating Udayanācārya, he received the blessings of the goddess Tripurā herself through having meditated upon Her name with the *Cintāmaṇi mantra*. But when he began to write, the story says, there was no one who was able to comprehend his words and he had to approach the goddess once again with the prayer that she should tone his learning down so that it comes within the comprehension of other people! All this amounts to an astounding set of stories which might prejudice one against the man and his work, but should really be seen as hyperbolic accounts which lay emphasis on the vast erudition of the man.

To an extent, it has been rightly observed that the faults of Śrīharṣa are the faults of his age. This much is certain that the criteria which are applied to the works of Kālidāsa or Vālmīki do not apply to the work of Śrīharṣa. The entire frame of reference is different. One would find oneself in serious difficulty if one were to begin comparing the inspired passages in the *Kumārsambhava* or the *Raghuvaṁśa* with the *Naiṣadhacarita.* Śrīharṣa is obviously no Kālidāsa. He simply does not have the noble restraint, that chasteness of expression, which marks the greatest of the Sanskrit poets. There are, of course, in the *Naiṣadhacarita*

glimmerings of true poetic beauty.[34] But, as in the legend of Śrīharṣa, it is the learning which comes through in this work. The entire range of 22 cantos and more than 20,000 verses becomes an occasion for a dazzling exercise in the display of virtuosity. In the descriptions which Śrīharṣa embarks upon, there is what one might call a baroque quality. The canvas he chooses to paint on is grand and so is his manner and his learning. Of this there is no doubt. Through intensive use of every weapon in the ornate armoury of *alaṅkāraśāstra,* through pun and rime and *double entendre* and alliteration, Śrīharṣa nearly succeeds in his avowed aim of writing the most difficult of the *mahākāvyas.* He employs *chandas* of the most complex variety and travels cheerfully along a tortuous path. That may not be the best way to write poetry but then to do that was probably not even his intention. His is an attempt to say a thing which has been said before, but in the most learned, the most obscure, also perhaps the most abstruse and ambiguous way, so that it becomes a test for the scholarship of others. The *Naiṣadhacarita* truly becomes a "*vidvadauṣadham"* meaning both a "bitter dose" and "a mental tonic" to the learned. It is not a *kāvya* that Śrīharṣa has written, but a *śāstrakāvya.*

Of the encyclopaedic knowledge of Śrīharṣa there is plenty of evidence throughout. Once he enters upon a description there is no holding him back. It may be the description of the love-play of Nala and Damayantī or a *stuti* of Viṣṇu in all his ten incarnations, or of the sallies of wit and repartee that go on at the time of the feast of the guests in the marriage procession of Nala at the house of Bhīma: he enters upon the most elaborate, the most minute of descriptions. For him describing Damayantī only as slim-waisted, full-breasted and heavy-hipped is being simple to the point of naivete. These very facts are brought in over and over again through similes and metaphors and not in one place but spread over the entire work. The key to the *enjoyment, not understanding,* of a work like this then is to take each verse by itself rather like a Persian couplet. It is in the saying and not in the thought that the excellence lies. If the work is read continuosly, the sentiment is apt to cloy and the descriptions prove to be too much. But if one takes the work in parts and goes into the intricacy, the elaborateness, with which he weaves a web of descriptions, the intent of Śrīharṣa becomes apparent. Then there is not only understanding but a decided degree of enjoyment that one can derive from this.

The *Naiṣadhacarita* is a *śṛṅgāra-rasa-pradhāna, a mahākāvya* in which the dominant flavour or sentiment is that of love. This is clearly stated early in the work and there is ample evidence throughout that it is so. There is a learned controversy among scholars whether the poem as it exists now with its 22 cantos is complete in itself or is only a fragment.[35] It has been suggested that Śrīharṣa did cover the entire story as given in the *Mahābhārata* in his poem but that the latter parts are lost. But this has been questioned, and some scholars believe that the poem is complete in itself and it was never the intention of Śrīharṣa to treat of what happens after the wedding, and of the myriad misfortunes which befall the pair. In a sense, the most conclusive argument in favour of the suggestion that the poem is complete in itself lies in the fact that if it was meant as an

exercise in the rendering of the *rasa* of *śṛṅgāra,* if it was indeed a poem which "like the celestial Gaṅgā was full of the delights of the sentiments of love", then it *could not* have been carried beyond the point at which it now ends. For what follows in the Nala story in the *Mahābhārata* after the wedding is a series of incidents in which anything but the *rasa* of *śṛṅgāra* dominates. Then Śrīharṣa would have had to spend most of his time with other sentiments such as *karuṇā* or *vibhatsa* or even *vīra*. If the focus was to be the sentiment of love, it is singularly proper that the *kāvya* finishes where it does, with the lovers sitting on a terrace bathed in moonlight, singing the praises of the moon in verse after verse.

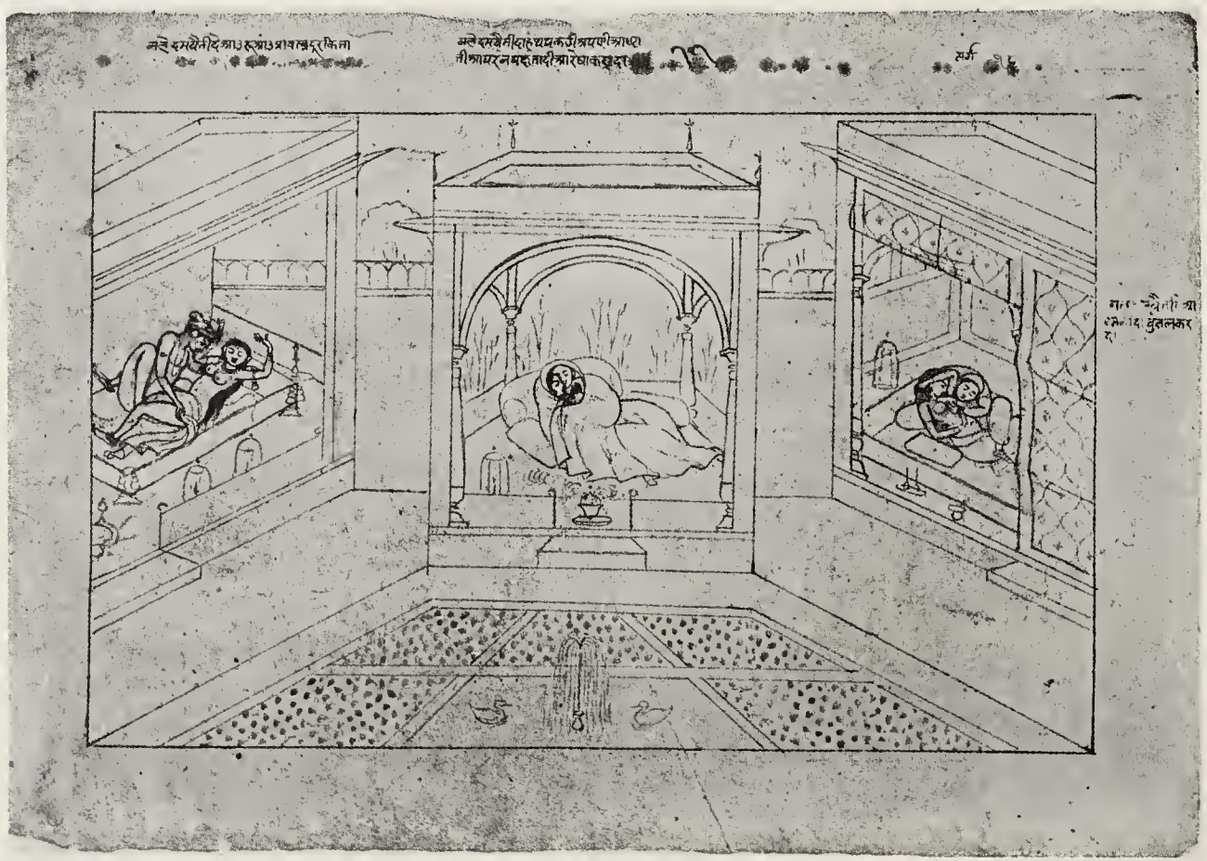


Fig. 16. The love making of Nala and Damayanti. National Museum. This drawing fills a gap in the Coomaraswamy drawings



Fig. 17. Detail from Figure 16

The treatment of *śṛṅgāra* leads Śrīharṣa most naturally into the intricacies of the *kāmaśāstra.* These he describes with such relish and frankness that a translator like Dr Handiqui discreetly has to leave several verses out of his translation with a note which simply says:[36] "indelicate". For Śrīharṣa, the love-play of Nala and Damayantī, the physical attributes of women, especially Damayantī, are motifs which he embroiders with the utmost deftness. When it comes to describing the charm of Damayantī as seen through Nala's eyes, he goes into the most minute *nakha-śikha-varṇana,* a description from tresses to toenails. But then this is entirely in keeping with the tradition which had developed by this time. Not only were the *nāyaka* and the *nāyikā* to be described as belonging to a specific category but a detailed description of their physical beauty was to be found in the literature of the time in Sanskrit and, later, in Hindi. This forms very much a part of the *Satsaī* of Biharī, or the *Sundara Śṛṅgāra* of Sundara Dāsa, or the *Rasikapriyā* of Keśavadāsa. Aṇd when Śrīharṣa comes to *sambhoga śṛṅgāra,* the physical union of Nala and Damayantī, he takes something like two cantos to describe their pleasures together. Nothing holds Śrīharṣa back at this point. He describes the progress of their love from touch to touch, often coming back, as is his wont, to the same point again and again. Countless times does Nala approach the knot in the lower garment of Damayantī, countless times does he massage her full breasts or takes her in his avid arms. Their *ratikrīḍā,* amorous play, is described in extremely intimate terms, within the limits that the times must have set for the poets, and we run into many a description like this:[37]

> "When Nala advanced to kiss the breasts of Damayantī with his mouth, it looked as if the moon itself was filling those golden pitchers with a nectar which was flowing from it."

Again, sure of this *Vātsyāyana,* this is how Śrīharṣa describes one of the episodes of their sexual union:[38]

> "When Nala found that Damayantī was becoming slow of limb because of excessive effort in making love and was approaching her orgasm, Nala suddenly shouted, 'Who is that?' and pointed to his own reflection on the floor to slow her reaching the point of orgasm because he had not yet arrived at it himself."

At no point is Śrīharṣa, like Nala here, in a hurry. It takes very little for him to wander off in a wholly unexpected direction. As the gods return to the heavens and meet Kali and Dvāpara going belatedly to the *svayaṁvara* in dark-bodied company, Śrīharaṣa invọlves them and others in a discussion of religious beliefs held by Jainas, Buddhists, Cārvākas, and Siddhas[39] to be able to show off his mastery over the doctrinal content of their sects. As Nala sits down to pray he enters upon a long *stuti* not only of Viṣṇu and all his ten *avatāras,* but of many another deity in a most knowledgeable way. The studies devoted to the *Naiṣadhacarita* speak convincingly of the awareness of

Śrīharṣa of all that was happening around him, of his intimacy with the systems of philosophy, with religious sects, with poetic literature, with the *śāstras* of *kāma* and *artha,* with *dharma* and *śrutis* and *smṛtis* and the arts of music and of dance. He seems to engineer opportunities for himself that he can use for the display of his knowledge. As the first night of the union of Nala and Damayantī approaches, he embarks upon an elaborate description of their palace. In verse after verse,[40] he describes the beauty of its architecture, the paintings on its walls, the richness of its ornamentation. He gets into swing so easily over a battle of wits like that between Nala and Kalā,[41] a confidante of Damayantī, when the two speak in ambiguous words about the love-making which Damayantī, on the morning after, feels shy about but which Nala is anxious for her friends to know. It is as if the poet is thrusting and probing in all directions hitting simultaneously more targets than one. The *pañcanalī*, a passage in the 13th canto, is justly famous. Sarasvatī, who is introducing the kings and gods and other personages present at the *svayaṁvara,* finds it necessary to describe the four gods and Nala at a time when the gods have all assumed the form of Nala so that Damayantī finds herself face to face with five Nalas. The goddess does not wish to disclose the identity of any of the gods for fear of offending them became they are playing this ruse on purpose; at the same time she does not wish to utter a lie or be unfair to Nala. She hits upon the idea of providing a description of each person in words which are capable of at least two meanings. When she describes Indra, thus, read one way, a verse is entirely applicable to Indra, but, read in another, it is descriptive equally of Nala. And she does this again and again for Agni, Varuṇa, Yama and for Nala. Thus, describing Indra, Sarasvatī says:[42]

> "Thou with calyx breasts! know him to be none other than Indra, the conqueror of mountains, whose thunder in battles never fails. Dost thou not see the great marvel of his, the presence of his numerous eyes miraculously concealed?"

But the same verse, when applied to Nala, yields another meaning:

> "Thou with calyx breasts! think not that he is a sinner in any way. He is a conqueror of kings and flees not from battle. Would thou not glance at his highly marvellous glance and eyes?"

Again, Sarasvatī describes Agni thus:[43]

> "Thou with a face like thy father's! The entire society of gods hath him for mouths. His seat is between Yama and Indra. Betake thyself to this refulgent one who doth ever possess a deep red beauty of lustre."

But, applied to Nala, the verse would read like this:

> "Thou with a face like thy father's! The entire council of learned hath him as its mouthpiece. His impartiality

is even greater than that of Yama and Indra. Betake thyself to this refulgent one who hath ever beautiful hands with a deep crimson hue."

The climax of this exercise comes in the celebrated *pañcanalī* (XIII, 34) in which, using the great richness of the Sanskrit language, Śrīharṣa comes up with a verse which is equally capable of describing each of the four gods and Nala.[44]

This kind of skill compels a decided measure of admiration. What one has to do is to get into the game, as it were. It is only then that one can appreciate the poetry of Śrīharṣa, or his learning. One cannot do it by taking a superior attitude and viewing the whole thing as mere poetic gymnastics; nor can one afford to give up in despair. The rules of Śrīharṣa's game have to be learnt for one to be able to play it. And the effort is certainly worth making, for in the game there can lie much pleasure.

One has to get used to the liberties that Śrīharṣa takes with time and space, for he observes no unities. He seems to roam at will through time. While engaged in describing the events of a particular night, he suddenly takes off and presents the event as if it had been taking place for years and is likely to continue for long. This penchant of his and his hyperbolic turn of phrase offends several sensibilities and there are numerous faults,[45] some of grammar, others of taste that it is possible to find both in his poetry and in his learning. A popular though apocryphal story[46] says that the great authority on the *alaṅkāraśāstra, Mammaṭa,* who wrote the monumental *Kāvyaprakāśa,* was an uncle of Śrīharṣa.



Fig. 18. Detail from Plate 7

When Śrīharṣa finished writing the *naiṣadhacarita* he presented the work with much pride to Mammaṭa. Having carefully gone through it, Mammaṭa returned it to Śrīharṣa saying that if only this work had been written a little before, it would had been of much help to him in the writing of his

Kāvyaprakāśa.For, he said, then he would not have had to hunt so hard and assiduously for examples of faults in poetic composition that form the theme of a section of his work: he would have found all of them together in one work! All this is of interest and perhaps some of this is justified. But, at his best, Śrīharṣa is edifying, and even his poetry, which has been much maligned, shows that ability occasionally to take a moment "and throw it clear beyond the reach of time," like great art does.



It is not difficult to see why the *Naiṣadhacarita* was chosen by the painter or his patron for being illustrated. There had always been interest in great works of literature, both Sanskrit and Hindi, in the Pahari area, even though the hills were removed from the plains in distance, and the great centres of culture lay far off. But even a cursory examination of the collections of manuscripts today in the families of *paṇḍits and jyotiṣis* and those who were near to the Raja in the hills is enough to show that there was a sensitive awareness of the classics in this area.[47] This conclusion one can arrive at both through looking at these manuscripts and through large sets of paintings that have survived: even stray leaves served as clues to many others which have not come down but were perhaps at one time painted. There are of course illustrated texts[48] of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* the *Mahābhārata,* the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa:* these one would have expected because the entire tenor of society in the hills indicates an interest alike in the form and content of religion. There are again the famous *Śaiva* texts like the *Śivapurāṇa,* or *Śākta* texts like the *Caṇḍīsaptaśatī,* which were painted several times over. These also do not come as any surprise. But when one notices sets devoted to texts like the *Gīta Govinda,* or Sanskrit plays like the *Karuṇābharaṇa,* or the texts of the *śṛṅgāra* theme such as the *Satsaī* of Bihārī, the *Rasikapriyā* and the *Kavipriyā* of Keśavadāsa, the *Sundara Sṛṅgāra,* and the like, one understands that the enthusiasm that these text evoked in the plains had also communicated itself to the minds of those that mattered in the hills. Perhaps knowing these texts was a part of the education of the ruler; they were certainly a part of education and literary repertoire of the *paṇḍit* who not only informed himself by reading these but communicated much of this pleasure to his patron. Through him they must obviously have travelled to the artists, for they always worked in close collaboration with *paṇḍits* who interpreted for them the texts, explaining difficult passages and emphasizing important ones.

The collections of manuscripts in the hills are very varied and one finds diverse themes treated in the copies of celebrated works which had been brought from the plains. There is an abundance of works on medicine, on *jyotiṣa,* on Vedic literature and *karma-kāṇḍa,* but there is also a fair sprinkling of works of a literary nature. The repeated occurrence in painting of the theme of Uṣā and Aniruddha, or the marriage of Rukmiṇī, or the episode of Kṛṣṇa and Sudāmā, is due perhaps to the interest which these episodes evoked in the Pahari mind; many of the sets are based not on the original texts but possibly on some local versions of the story popular in the area. Inscriptions in the Pahari or Dogri dialect at the back of some of these are fair indications of this. Sometimes large projects were undertaken. The sets of drawings of the *Karuṇābharaṇa* or the *Jaiminīya Aśvamedha,*[49] which are not the best known texts even in the plains, signify the interest which attached to works like these in the hills. We even have some leaves of illustration of the Sanskrit *Prabodhacandrodaya nāṭaka*[50] and some stray leaves of the beginning portions of Kālidāsa's Meghadūta.[51] Another leaf treats of Śakuntalā in the hermitage; this once again possibly relates itself to a larger set now lost to us.[52] The *Kirātārjunīya* was treated at some length in a whole set which is still preserved.[53] The *Bṛhattrayī,*

or the three difficult *kāvyas,* the *Kirātārjunīya,* the *Siśupāla-vadha,* and the *Naiṣadhacarita,* therefore, fit perfectly into the picture and no surprise arises from their being selected by the artists for illustration.

Then there is also the strong strain of interest in narrative, in the human interest of a story. This is a little different from the interest that was taken in the illustration of fables such as the *Anwār-i-Suhaili* or the *Hamzā-Nāmah* at the Mughal court. The Pahari painter shows little interest in the *Pañcatantra* or the *Daśakumāracarita*. It is to stories with a strong emotional content that he was drawn. One reason



Fig. 19. Illus. to Jaiminiya Aśvamedha, by Sajnu, Bharat Kala Bhavan, cf. Fig. 10



Fig. 20. Illus. to Meghadūta. Chandigarh Museum

why the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* were picked out as great favourites for illustration, as has been pointed out in a study, was not the Vaiṣṇava bent of mind of the rulers or their artists—they were possibly more inclined in the Śaiva or the Śākta direction;[54] it was rather the intense human interest of the text. The lives of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa as two human incarnations of Viṣṇu were natural choices for the painters. These gave them the opportunity to explore the entire gamut of emotions against the back-ground of the childhood of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, their relationship with their families, the situations in daily life which some thousand

years ago were more or less the same as those in the 18th century; therefore this extraordinary interest in these texts which are stories at one level and have an elevated meaning at another. Even when the artist was not exactly painting a series with a narrative as the background, he picked up subjects like isolated episodes from the *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa primarily because the legend was well known and the mere mention of the names of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa evoked a complete and intense image. The interest in narrative also shows through the extensive sets of paintings based on well-known romances. The *Hamīr Haṭha* has no religious, mythological or even great poetic content, but it was chosen not once but three times to be painted in its entirety.[55] The romance of Mādhavānala and Kāmakandalā[56] or the stories of Vikramāditya[57] again come in for attention; so does a purely secular kind of story as that of Raja Rasalu which was made the theme of many a panel in the murals of Sujanpur Tira.[58] The *Naiṣadhacarita* then appears as a natural choice for illustration; as a great narrative it touches on the one hand a chord of response in the painter and, on the other, unlike *Hamīr Haṭha,* attracts because of its flavoured involvement with the *rasa* of *śṛṅgāra,* for this *rasa* underlies some of the greatest paintings from the Pahari area, especially of the later period. The fact that Śrīharṣa in his *mahākāvya* which abounds in the *rasa* of *śṛṅgāra*, enters upon loving descriptions not only of the physical charms of Nala and Damayantī but also goes into the intricacies of the *Kāmaśāstra,* would have been enough to make the Pahari painter deeply interested in the work. He had, we know, taken delight in painting whole sets of erotic pictures for the delectation of the raja and his '*zenana',* often at the ruler's own bidding.[59] For him, then, painting the *Naiṣadha* was a nearly perfect thing to do. In doing this, he could do three things at the same time: to narrate a story, to illustrate a classical text, and in painting after painting to linger with loving detail first on love and, later, on descriptions of the sexual act itself. He had done this with great joy in a set like the *Gita Govinda* which has no proper story as such but tells of the various stages in the love of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. There he had been very explicit in the depiction of the love of the divine pair; he had shown them seated close together in the land of tenderness, Kṛṣṇa placing the *bindiyā* on the forehead of Rādhā or painting her toe-nails or tending her tresses and anointing her breasts. From here the painter had gone with perfect ease on to the love-making of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā as described in Jayadeva's text showing them in several paintings in actual physical union.[60] Here, in the *Naiṣadhacarita,* the painter had the opportunity to do that again and in even greater detail as the series of drawings which treat of this are proof.

When the painter, however, chose the *Naiṣadhacarita,* he set himelf a hard task, for Śrīharṣa's canvas is on the grand scale. In the cities of his description,[61] "loudly did the ocean of shops roar, with many conches and gems with crabs in the shape of hands moving in counting the *kauries* and with white sand in the shape of camphor"; the palaces pierced the dome of the sky with the points of their turrets and the gardens stretched out to the shores of distant seas. The crowds of princes who approached Kuṇḍinapura to take part in the *svayaṁvara* were such that[62] "All the inhabitants

of the directions having departed, with that beauty of the world (Damayantī) as their aim, the spaces of the directions felt a relief from the sufferings caused by the pressure of these people living in them." And:[63] "So crowded were the highways with soldiers that even sesamum seeds scattered over them would not reach the ground; any King who could there manage to make headway felt as if he has already obtained Damayantī."

The painter decided to render all this on a scale which was considerably smaller, not only because the small surface area on which he painted restricted him, but also because within his own experience the states were smaller, the cities were only overgrown towns and the largest congregations of men that he might have seen in his life were certainly not like those in which sesamum seeds if scattered would not reach the ground! When he paints the *svayaṁvara* chamber, then, it is not through the number of persons, which does not go much beyond a hundred, but through his skill, that he is able to convey a wonderful feeling of crowding and excitement within this restricted space. With all this, it is fairly obvious that the grand scale of the conception of Śrīharṣa is not to be found here. The city of Kuṇḍinapura as seen from a distance (Plate 31) is much shrunk compared to that described in Śrīharṣa's verses. The pool of water by the side of which Nala finds and captures the golden swan, was in Śrīharṣa's verse[64] a pool of water "as if it were the ocean living hidden in the garden, afraid of being churned, taking within it long accumulated riches that excelled in everlasting gems." But in the painting (Plate 7) the pool really becomes a small tank which, as will be seen



Fig. 21. Illus. to the Gīta Govinda. National Museum

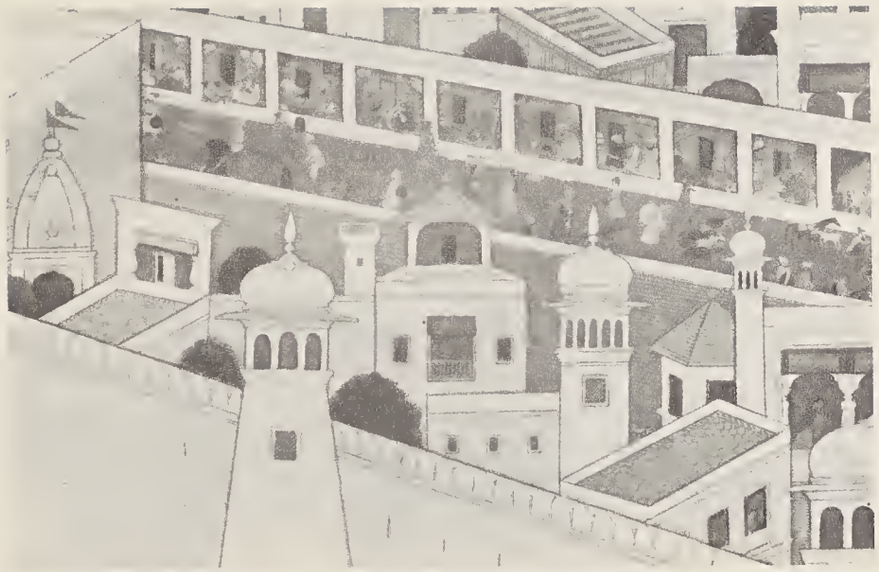


Fig. 22. The city as seen by the Swan, Detail from Plate 31

later, constantly changes shape from painting to painting depending not upon the side from which the painter chooses to look at it but often only upon his fancy. Taken together, the entire setting of the story has been transferred to the court of a Pahari Raja of the eighteenth century.

Dr Coomaraswamy had drawn attention to this and had developed a special fondness for his drawings because he found this "description of the intimate daily life of a hill Rajput court a century or two ago" "very interesting and attractive."[65] One sees in these pictures scenes that must undoubtedly have been within the artist's personal experience. These is a ring of authenticity in pictures in which we see Nala waking up in the morning, the dawn being announced by attendants; his sitting at his prayers, receiving tributary kings, and then going through the elaborate ritual



Fig. 23. Princes moving towards Kundinapura. Detail from Plate 24



Fig. 24. The city of Kuṇḍinapura. Detail from Plate 17

of an afternoon bath; feeding himself and the Brahmins, or performing his evening prayers and then sitting with his beloved on the top of a terrace doing little else beyond admiring the moon and dedicating to it strings of verses in more than a whole canto. This is the kind of leisurely pace, the daily routine, that we associate with the period and the region from which these paintings came. The description of

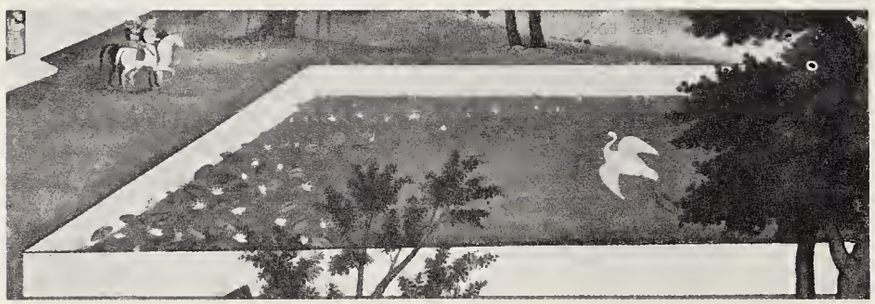


Fig. 25. The Pool of water. Detail from Plate 6

the court of Sansar Chand of Kangra by Moorcroft[66] comes strikingly close to this pace and routine in feeling and it is surely not difficult to imagine that much of this was representative of the tenor of life as it was led at many an other Pahari Court.

Because of restricting himself to his own immediate experience, the painter sometimes makes 'errors' in the rendering of details. 'The golden *haṁsa* or swan who plays such a pivotal role in the earlier part of the story is not a *haṁsa* as seen in these paintings but a bird more resembling a *krauñca* or heron.[67] This happens because even though the *haṁsa* finds so frequent a mention in Indian literature and mythology, as a bird in real life it is rather rare. It is entirely likely that the painter had never seen a real *haṁsa* in his own life. But he was well familiar with a waterfowl like a heron; it is therefore a heron indeed that the *haṁsa* becomes in these paintings.[68] Again, the Aśoka-tree under which Nala sits in the garden as he waits for the return of the *haṁsa* (Plate 9), becomes transformed into a totally different tree, obviously because the painter of the series did no know what the Aśoka-tree looked like. But this, as has been said before, is to be expected. These are 'errors', if they can be so called, of the kind which makes Nanda in the *Bhāgavata purāṇa* pictures look much like a noble at the court of Shāhjahān.

Within these limits, it is remarkable how easily the painter gets into the frame of mind of the poet. It is as if he is able to identify himself completely with the spirit of the *kāvya*. While he is decidedly more interested than the poet in carrying the story forward, his personal preference also



Fig. 26. Nala going out. Detail from Plate 5



Fig. 27. One of the sons of Balwant Singh on horseback. Detail. Chandigarh Museum



Fig. 27(a). The scribe writing letters of invitation. Detail from Plate 35



Fig. 28. The swans flying in a circle. Detail from Plate 7

seems to be to linger long and with obvious love over descriptions and details. Like the poet, he is not much worried about consistency or about the unity of time and space. He makes his own laws as required, and changes a setting, or a costume, even whole groups of characters, entirely to suit his pleasure or the pictorial demands of the situation. One can, as an example, take the pool of water which appears in the series of pictures (Plates 6,7 and 30) of the episode of the *haṁsa.* This pool takes on quite different aspects in different pictures. In the painting in which Nala captures the swan (Plate 6), we find the pool full of lotus leaves and flowers at the left, the right part where the flying *haṁsa* is seen for the second time being bare. In the very next painting (Plate 7) the aspect changes. The gate in the outer wall of the garden has shifted; so have the lotuses in the pool; and there is considerable change in the foliage. In the earlier painting the tree is of one description; in the next it changes and there is another, somewhat withered tree which appears; in the third (Plate 7) a flowering tree is seen close to it again. 'The *banyan* tree seen in one of the paintings (Plate 7) at the far end of the pool shows a traveller seated under it by its roots; in the next painting (Plate 30) we find the *banyan* tree provided with a parapet or *tiālā* around its trunk and two soldiers stopping by it probably to say a quick prayer. This kind of game goes on throughout. As the garden of Damayantī appears in the first picture when the swan descends in it (Plate 8), it has a shape which is very different from the one which it acquires in the second (Plate 33) when the swan takes its leave of Damayantī and flies back. In the second picture the charming vignette of a



Fig. 29. The Persian wheel. Detail from Plate 8

Persian wheel outside the garden has disappeared; a loggia or garden-house has suddenly materialised, the green areas have become larger, with the little fountain of water having yielded place to a square tiled area on which Damayantī now stands as she raises her hand to her head and excitedly sees the swan flying away to carry her message of love to Nala.

It is not only in descriptions like these that the painter makes all those changes at will and goes along with the poet as he varies his descriptions from verse to verse; what is more important is the manner in which he, in his own way, captures the essence of the situation that the poet describes. The metaphors and similes that Śrīharṣa scatters



Fig. 30 The viraha of Damayanti. Detail from Plate 10

over his verses are not all caught or rendered by the painter, but he does get into the spirit of the *kāvya* very easily. In the marvellous group of paintings which shows the *viraha* of Damayanti after the swan flies away leaving her pining for Nala, scenes (Plates 10 to 12) in which she is tormented by the clouds in the sky, or by the moon, the painter manages marvellously to evoke that feeling of suppressed excitement and pain that inheres in the situation. As Damayanti lies in her chamber, thinking upon her love and staring into vacant space, a commotion arises that the painter has been able to capture with perfect conviction. The lotus leaf with which Damayanti is fanned by an ageing duenna, the flowers which were applied to her bare bosom to cool her fever but have wilted at the mere touch of her, the fan which one maid holds over her and a scented handkerchief which another solicitously offers, the way in which another maid massages her feet or three maids at the back converse with each other wondering about the state their mistress is suddenly in, the *candana* which is being prepared for being applied to her forehead and bosom in the left cornor, and the bed which is being brought out from a side to be taken on the roof for Damayanti's 'fever' to cool by lying on it: these are all elements in a scene of tremendous animation. The artist here perfectly interprets what Śrīharṣa in his own manner



Fig. 31. The tormenting clouds. Detail from Plate 11

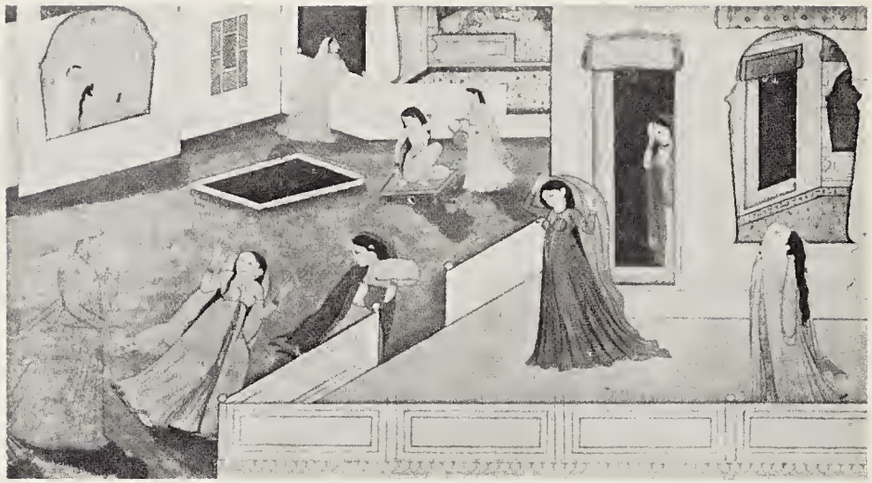


Fig. 32. The invisible Nala in Damayanti's apartments. Detail from Plate 18

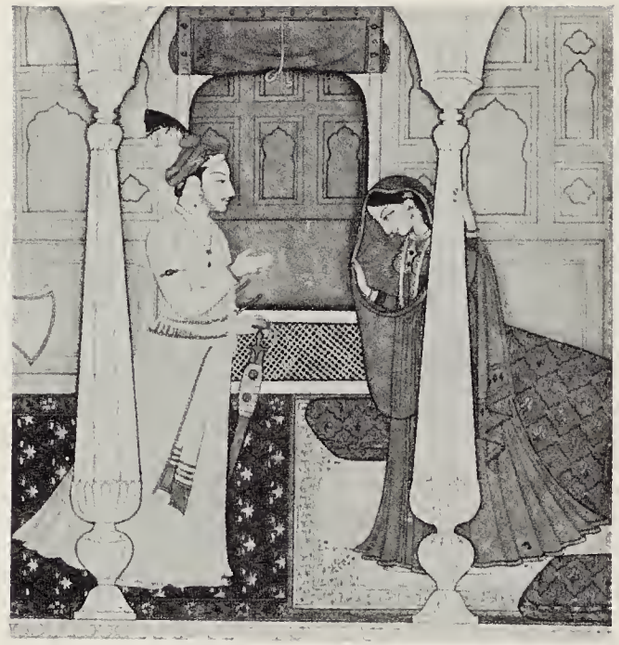


Fig. 34. Nala conversing with Damayanti. Detail from Plate 21



Fig. 33. Nala and Damayanti seated. Detail from Plate 22



Fig. 35. The ducks in the courtyard. Detail from Plate 4

attempts to convey through his verses. One sees here great consternation, and almost hears the talk, suppressed and soft, of the suddenness with which this state has overtaken Damayantī; the concern of every person in the picture suddenly becomes the concern of the viewer.

Again, when Nala enters in invisible form in the inner apartment of Damayantī's palace, the description by Śrīharṣa of the *bhrānti,* delusion, in which the companions of Damayantī fall, or the small 'accidents' which take place such as the end of the skirt of one of the maids being caught in the finger-ring of Nala thus baring her back, is perfectly matched by the painter. He not only describes what Śrīharṣa has narrated but invents from his own experience or imagination little vignettes (Plates 18, 19); a woman asleep in a chamber to show the normal tempo of life in the palace, or a group in which another maid is seated bare-bodied on a *caukī* as she goes through the ritual of a bath. The entire series of happenings in the palace (Plate 39) show an inventiveness on the part of the painter which cannot have come but for his having become entirely identified with the approach that the poet takes in these passages. When Nala as a messenger of the gods sits down with Damayantī to place before her their case, there is no change of scene or setting that the poet indicates. And yet the painter, with the obvious intention of avoiding monotony of composition, constantly keeps on changing the shape of the loggia, the colour and the form of awnings, even the placing of Nala and Damayantī (Plates 21-22; 41-45). Nala appears standing in one place, sitting in another; near Damayantī in one painting, at a slight distance in the next. All this is done with the intent of matching the liveliness that is inherent in the situation. If the colours of the clothes worn by characters suddenly vary without explanation, all this is a part of that naivete, that willing suspension of disbelief, that is so much a part of the mental make up of the Pahari painter, who here lends his talent to illustrate the verses of a poet who, like him, knows few laws.



VI

This set of paintings, like any other, raises questions of art history, the first of them being its precise relationship with the Coomaraswamy drawings, a matter which we have briefly considered before but which needs to be looked at more closely. From the point of view of the continuity of the narrative, we have noticed that, the two are closely tied; the Karan Singh paintings deal with the first half of the story of the *Naiṣadhacarita* and suddenly stop at a point from which the Coomaraswamy drawings, equally suddenly, begin. But this could be purely a matter of accident: other circumstances could have been responsible for this. The evidence on which we must rely, therefore, before the two can be considered as integral parts of the same set has really to be other than this.

Here we have help from the fact that the size and format[69] of the two is almost exactly the same. But, far more important than this, it is the feeling pervading both of them that is identical. All that is there in the Coomaraswamy drawings, all that has been pointed out about them: their reticent sensitivity, their refinement, their incredible fluency of line, are there in these paintings in the same measure. The two are products of the same atelier, if one can use that term to describe the modest home in which the Pahari painter for the most part worked. At first sight, it might appear that the drawings have an edge over the paintings in the fluency of their line. But a careful examination would reveal that if the line paintings does not immediately strike one as equally fluent or gliding, it is because, somehow, the colours take attention away from it. The purity of the outlines that one can see to such marvellous advantage in the drawings is not lost: it is only overlaid with the colour of the painting.

The connection between the paintings and drawings comes into focus sharply when one takes from each a small area, such as a group of figures and sees the way in which the artist handles groups and the individuals who form them. The delicacy of contour, the sureness of gesture, the amazing facility of the artist to render the human form in almost any conceivable posture, investing the line always with great verve, is to be seen alike in the paintings and the drawings. It is so easy to compare, for instance the feeling of tremendous animation that flows through the painting (Plate 13) in which we find Damayantī falling down in a swoon, being unable to bear any more her separation from Nala, with the Coomaraswamy drawing that depicts, for instance, the departure of Damayantī from Bhīma's house after her wedding.[70] Of course in the series of drawings there are situations which call for more crowded activity, like the royal feast given to the Brahmins or the marriage procession of Nala, so that the artist gets more scope for lingering over intimate details and yet makes a nearly perfect composition in terms of showing the main part of the action subserved by parts of the drawings in which supporting activity takes place. But in the paintings also, the painter, wherever he has an opportunity as for example in the painting which shows the kings of the earth marching at the head of their armies to the *svayaṁvara* of Damayantī (Plate 24), gives precisely the same feeling of having acquired almost complete mastery over the medium and the situation alike. He thinks nothing of drawing in perfect detail, for instance, forty to fifty



Fig. 36. The swooning of Damayanti. Detail from Plate 13

figures in one painting and suggesting many more by little turbans projecting above heads that remain unseen because of people in front oversecting, far into the distance till the eye cannot take in any more.

Another thing that possibly stands in the way of the finished paintings making the same impact of purity that the drawings do is the relative 'weight' of architecture in the paintings. While in the drawings architecture becomes reduced merely to lines that do not obtrude, in the paintings the walls and towers, minarets and loggias, acquire more substance, as it were. But then this is inherent in the situation and, if anything, one admires the extent to which the artist is able to play architecture down and turn it into a foil to the marvellous ease of movement of the figures which inhabit it. This architecture becomes in the hand of the painter a kind of 'architecture of silence', and one really wonders if another painter, given the same task of painting

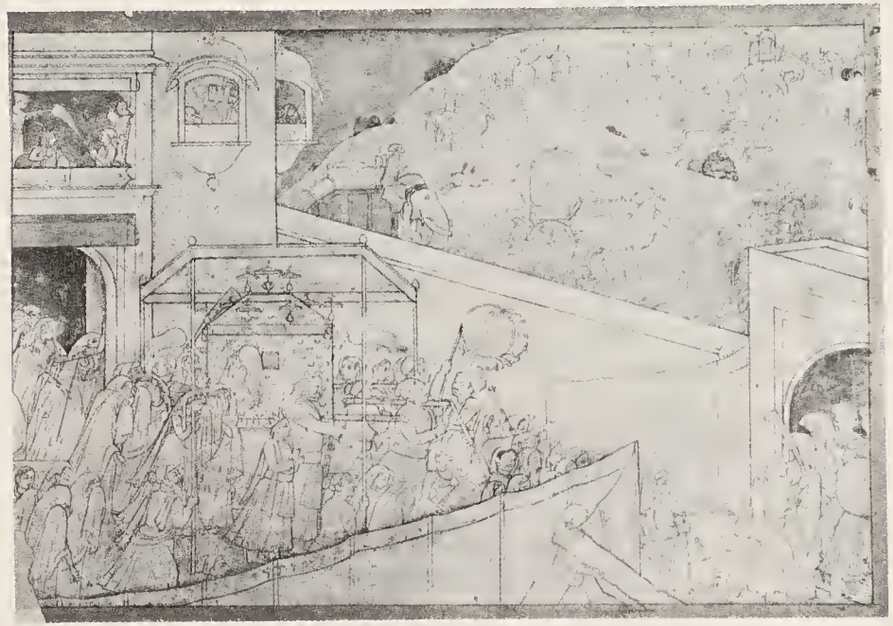


Fig. 37. The departure of Damayanti from Bhima' house. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



Fig. 38. Nala going to the svayaṁvara. Detail from Plate 16

a whole series of scenes in a palace setting, or depicting busy cities and bazars, could have done all that without making architecture dominate over figures and thus mar that considerable feeling of space and lightness that these paintings now possess.

The numbering of the Coomaraswamy drawings is another matter which is of interest. The fact that each of the drawings bears a number was noticed in 1910 by Dr Coomaraswamy when he first published them.[71] "I do not know how many of these originally existed; I possess 48 and a few fragments of which number 51 is the *svayaṁvara,* and the last number is 112". Dr Coomaraswamy went on to say: "Many of them are more or less damaged by white ants, . . . doubtless responsible also for the missing numbers". Now that we take the Karan Singh paintings, which are 47 in number, and the Coomaraswamy drawings, which begin with No. 51, as forming one continuous set, we have to account only for three missing leaves, 48 to 50. Then the series of drawings begins at No. 51 again and goes on with some gaps to No. 112.

The Karan Singh-Coomaraswamy set, besides having the connection between its two parts that we have noticed, has an interesting relationship outside of itself, that with the large set of sanguine drawings in the National Museum. That set consists of 110 drawings at present, although the last is marked No. 111, one of the leaves having apparently been lost. All these drawings are in sanguine, in the *sindhuri kalam* as it is called, are unprimed, and are of the same



Fig. 39. Damayanti listening to the praises of Nala. Detail from Plate 3

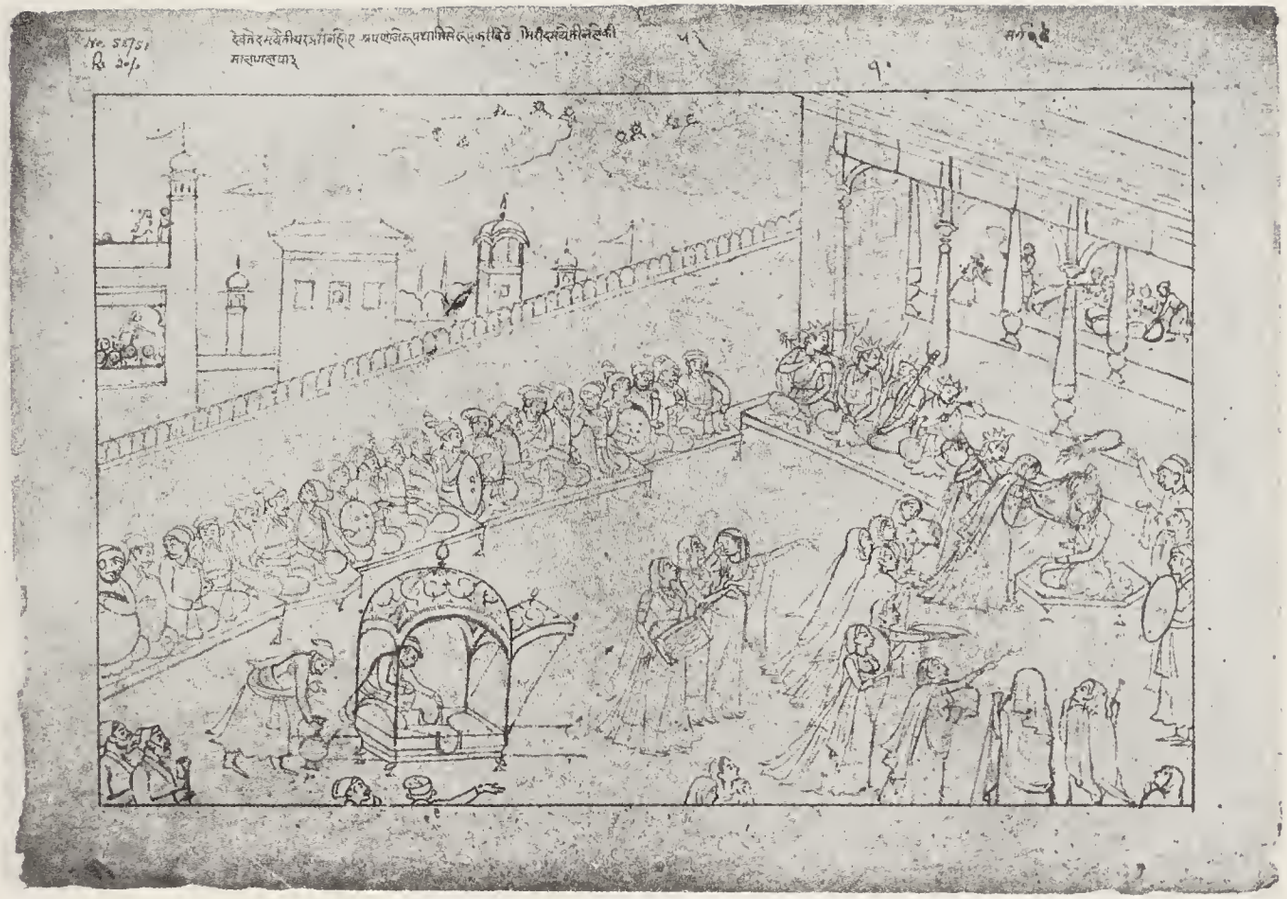


Fig. 40. The svayamvara of Damayanti. Sanguine drawing, National Museum. This drawing fills a gap in the Coomaraswamy drawings

size[72] as the paintings and drawings that we have noticed. A comparison of these National Museum drawings with the Karan singh-Coomaraswamy leaves yields exciting results, for it soon becomes obvious that the sanguine drawings are causally related to the others, being first studies for them. For each Coomaraswamy drawing and each Karan Singh painting there is a corresponding drawing in this set, with which it can be compared. This comparison reveals the existence of a closeness, in this case not only of size and feeling but extending to detail, and to whole compositions; it is in fact so extraordinary that the two cannot be seen as removed from each other, except perhaps, to a small extent,

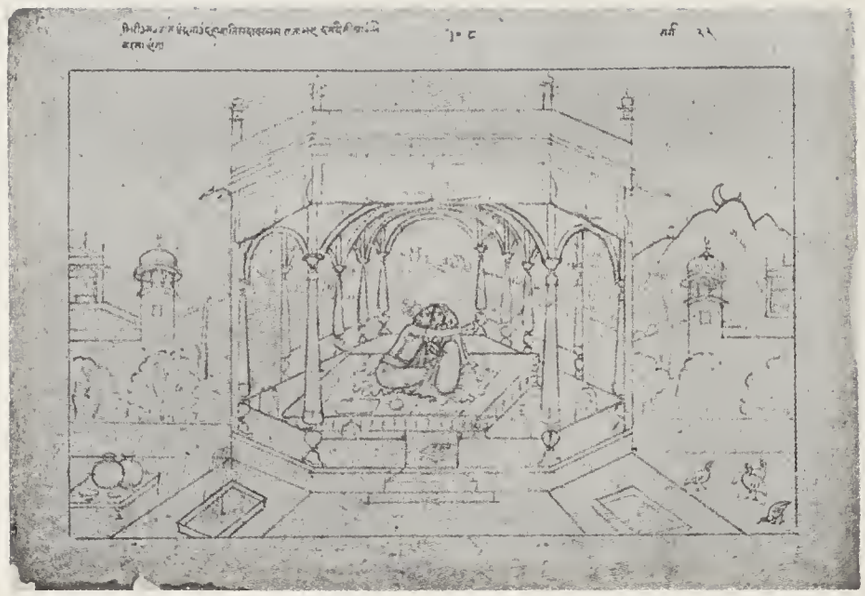


Fig. 41. Nala and Damayanti watching the rising moon. Sanguine drawing, National Museum



Fig. 42. Nala and Damayanti watching the rising moon. Freer Gallery

in point of time. One can take out any painting, compare it with a corresponding sanguine drawing and be certain to find that the painting is actually based upon the drawing. The sanguine drawing is naturally not a fully finished work, and there are some minor deviations from it here and there in the painting, but this is to be expected because these drawings in sanguine apparently represent the first conception by the master artist of the 'design' of the paintings—they are significantly called *namoonas* by the Pahari artist—from which paintings were to be worked out later. This is something to which we are well used. Sanguine drawings of very well known sets in Pahari paintings are available:[73] there are several single leaves or whole sets with which we are familiar: thus, the Ranjha *Rāmāyaṇa* at the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benares.[74] Of that set we do not have corresponding paintings, but these are obviously the first studies which were to form later the basis of finished pictures.

The question that can well arise, however, is that even if the Karan Singh-Coomaraswamy set and the National Museum sanguine drawings are closely related, it could just conceivably be that it is the sanguine drawings which are based upon the paintings, and not the reverse. While a possibility like this cannot immediately be ruled out, one has to recall that the practice of the Pahari artist was to retain a series of master-sketches in the family. These were mostly done in sanguine, were not meant to be worked upon

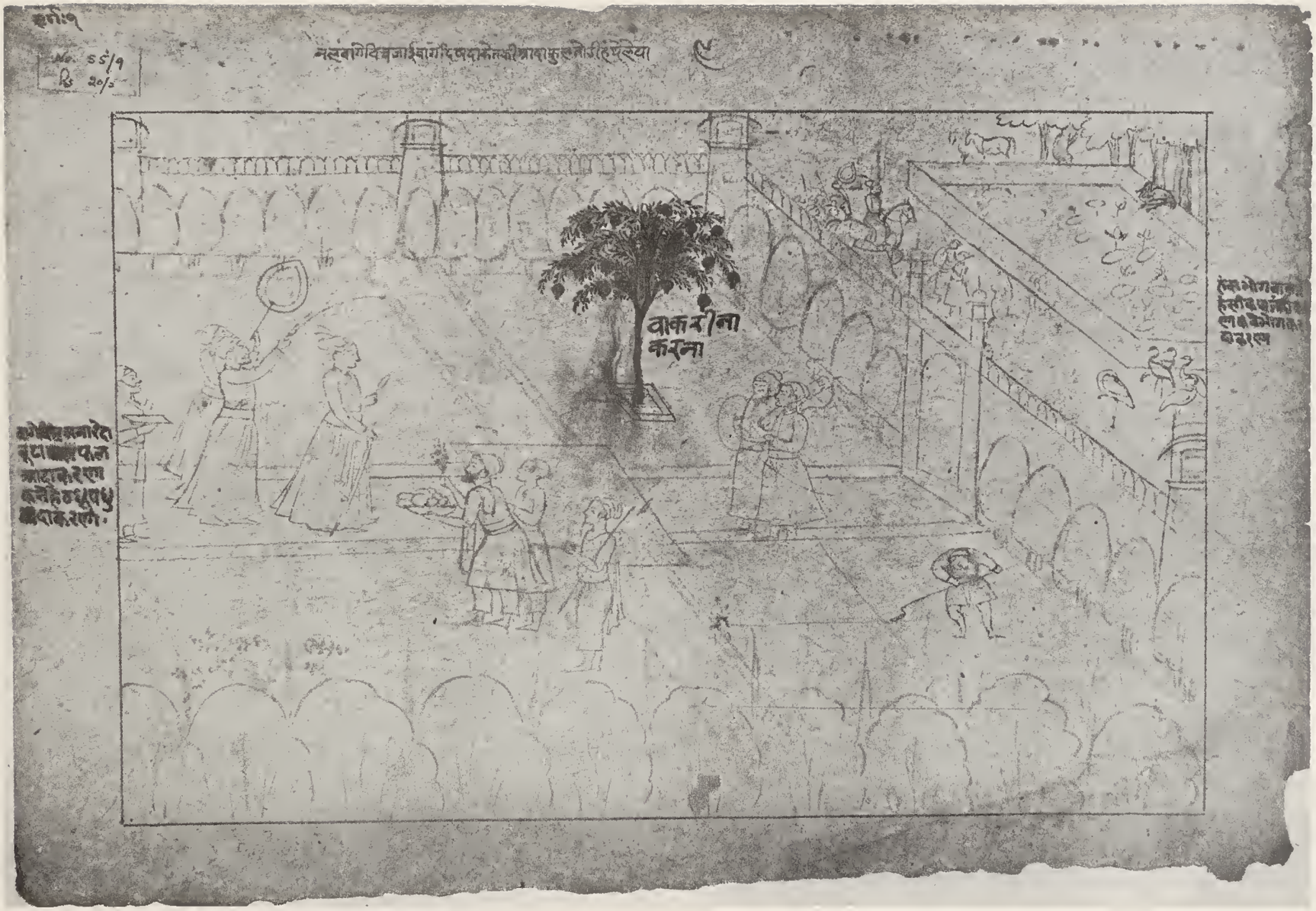


Fig. 43. Nala in the garden. Sanguine drawing, National Museum

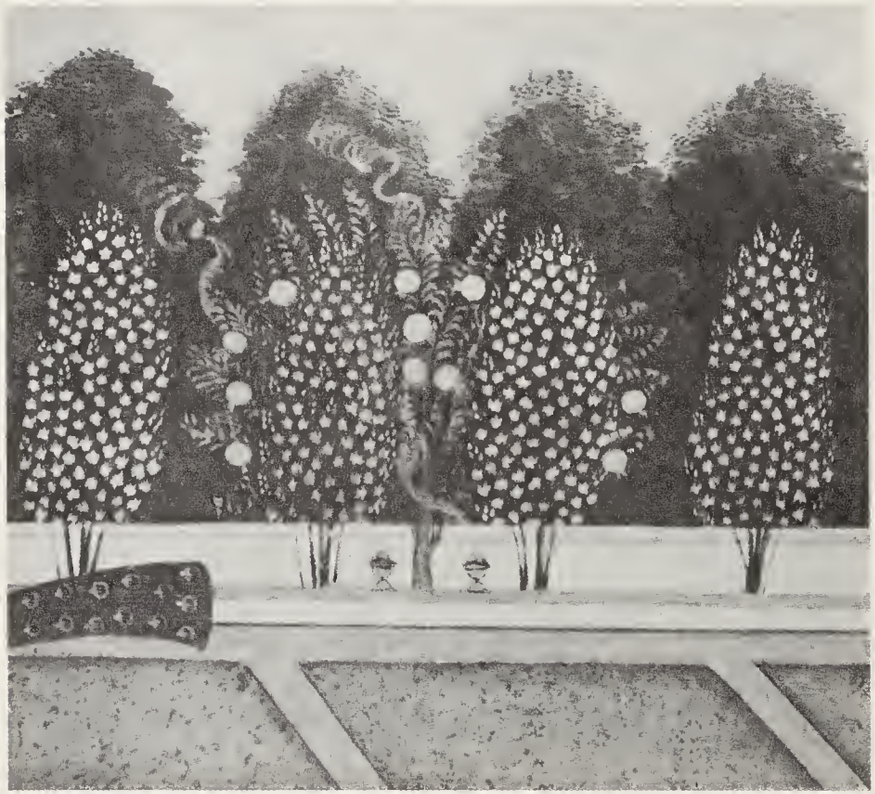


Fig. 44. The pomegranate tree. Detail from Plate 29

themselves, and only served as models for subsequent pictures to be produced either by the same artist or by other members of his family. In this case, in addition, we have most interesting intrinsic evidence indicating that the sanguine drawings were really preliminary drawings which were produced in consultation or collaboration with someone else, possibly a senior artist, but more likely a *paṇḍit* who was interpreting the verses upon which the drawings were based. One could take as an instructive example the National Museum drawing (Fig. 34) in which Nala, distraught by the love of Damayantī, enters the pleasure-garden having come out of his palace. As he reaches the garden, the gardener presents to him a trayful of fruits and a sprig of flowers. Nala himself holds in his hand a flower which, in the relevant verse of the *Naiṣadhacarita,* is identified as *Ketakī* and which provides Śrīharṣa with the occasion for some poetic flights as he makes elaborate references to *Ketakī* having been cursed by Śiva. The drawing, bound by straight rules on all sides, is numbered 9 above, and by the side of the number there is a brief description in the Pahari or Dogri dialect in Devanāgarī script, which identifies the scene. It reads: "*Nala bāge vich jāee bāg dikhdā; ketakiyā dā phul tor hathe leyā.*" The meaning is quiet clear. The reference is to Nala going to the garden, inspecting it and taking a *Ketakī* flower in his hand.[75] In the centre of the drawing, superimposed upon the first design, there is a pomegranate tree with pomegranates hanging face downwards, and a small incense-burner placed on the ground by the trunk of the tree with smoke rising upwards from it. On the left margin there is a fiveline note in Devanāgarī but in a hand and pen different from the one in which the inscription on top was written; this reads: "*Bāge vich anāre dā booṭā phaldā karnā kane heṭh dhoop dhukhdā karnā",* meaning: "Show a fruitbearing pomegranate tree in the garden and *dhoop* burning under it (the tree)".

The clue to this whole situation lies in the fact that the person who has inscribed the instruction at the left is obviously drawing the artist's attention to a description given



Fig. 45. Nārada and Parvata at Indra's court. Sanguine drawing, National Museum



Fig. 46. Nārada and Parvata at Indra's court, Detail from Plate 14

by Śrīharṣa in the *Naiṣadhacarita*. In fact, there is a specific verse in Canto I, verse 82, which the person making the note had in mind. This is how that verse reads: "He saw fruits on a pomegranate tree which was being fertilized with smoke, as if they were thoughts engaged in rigorous austerities, drinking in smoke, face downward, in order to attain the height of Damayantī's breasts." Apparently the artist of the drawing in his first design had missed out this detail, but the detail was thought worthy of inclusion by the person writing the note in the left margin, possibly the *paṇḍit* under whose guidance the artist was working.[76] The necessary correction, if one can call it that, or elaboration, is carried but boldly in the drawing itself, but only in the form of a rough note, for one notices that the pomegranate tree as now introduced occupies too prominent a place in the drawing and interferes with the smooth flow of lines of trees at the back and the diagonal lines at the right, parallel to the garden wall. It is interesting after this to see that when the painter finishes the painting (Plate 29) basing it upon the same drawing, he includes this detail but not without an alternation: he takes the pomegranate tree out from here, where it jars, towards the back, in the middle of the row of round-topped cypresses where, duly, the pomegranates hang with their faces downwards drinking in smoke hoping to attain the height of Damayantī's breasts. That, for the pomegranates, is much



Fig. 47. The dilemma of Bhīma. Detail from Plate 47



Fig. 48. Damayanti and the painter. Sanguine drawing, National Museum

more of an acceptable placing as far as the painting is concerned. The artist of the painting has thus carried out the instruction but made it merge with his general scheme for this painting.

In this very sanguine drawing there is yet another instructive note at the right of the margin. This reads: "*Hans bhog vāste hansī kachh jāndā karnā kane bhog kardā karnā.*" This means: "Show the swan going to the female swan for mating and show it in fact as mating." In the drawing itself, his instruction has been duly carried out, if one notices the amatory pair at the other end of the small pond with lotuses. This again, quite clearly, has been done because the instructions are couched in the imperative, having been given by the person who knew the text intimately. In the finished painting based upon the drawing we do see the swan and his consort mating although not exactly on the spot indicated in the drawing but in the group for swans at right where the male is fluttering above the female with an obvious intention.

One could take another example which is perhaps even more interesting. In the sanguine drawing (Fig. 45) in which Nārada followed by the sage Parvata comes to the court of Indra in Heaven, bringing news of the coming *svayaṁvara* of Damayantī, we find the two portrayed at four different points, once when the gods greet them and offer to convey them in their *vimānas;* again, as they approach Mandākinī and the goddess emerges to pay homage; the sages then cross the river and are greeted outside his palace by Indra and his followers, Indra bowing down at the feet of Nārada in obeisance; and finally, we see the group



Fig. 49. Damayantī and the painter. Detail from Plate 4

seated inside a chamber with Indra on a throne with a bolster behind him and a cushion in his lap, as Nārada and Parvata sit facing him. When the artist first made the drawing, one can see clearly that he showed Indra as seated on a *caukī* or throne and the two sages on the floor. This, obviously, was not proper, and while the artist gave his usual descriptive label about the drawing in the top margin, the drawing was carefully reviewed by the same person who had suggested modifications in the other drawings of the series. This time his comment, at the left, reads: "*Nārde dā kane Indre dā singhāsana iko karnā",* meaning, "Show Nārada and Indra on the same throne." This injunction, more in keeping with the reverence in which Nārada is to be held,

is carried out by the artist so that he draws a larger throne upon which both Indra and Nārada clearly sit, although sage Parvata still occupies a slightly lower status. In the drawing, as it now exists, we thus find Indra's throne originally small and occupied by himself, but later enlarged to accommodate Nārada also. When we see the finished painting of the same scene (Plate 14), we do find Indra seated on his throne and, facing him, Nārada and Parvata seated on another throne. There is thus a small departure from the corrected drawing in a matter of detail, but the spirit of the instruction has clearly been carried out and Nārada is given at least the same status as Indra since he sits on a raised seat facing him.

This kind of evidence, to our minds, is conclusive, because the "errors" which we find in the sanguine drawings do not appear in the finished paintings; the artist of these had apparently availed himself of the suggestion, even perhaps the directive, of the *Paṇḍit* who was making notes in the margin to make the illustration conform to the spirit of the text of the essence of relationships between various personages in this story. If one were to think of the other alternative, that the drawings are later than the paintings and are based upon them, this kind of noting in the margin would obviously have not been there and there would have been no correction of "errors", as we find now.

Of radical departures from the sanguine drawings in the Karan Singh paintings or the Coomaraswamy drawings there are few. An important one that we can notice is in the scene which shows the beginning of the *svayaṁvara* ceremony where Bhīma, father of Damayantī, finds himself in a dilemma, because he does not know how to introduce and announce the identity of the numberless kings and gods in the distinguished assemblage. The sanguine drawing (Fig. 40) show Damayantī as actually having entered the *svayaṁvara* chamber and the gods and kings seated at the right under a roof, but we cannot see King Bhīma prominently. The point of this drawing is, therefore, in danger of being lost, because in the story the predicament of Bhīma is the occasion for Viṣṇu instructing Sarasvatī to go and take upon herself the task of introducing each suitor to the hand of Damayantī.[77] In the finished painting (Plate 47) the point in the episode is rendered explicit. King Bhīma is shown at the back with his finger raised wonderingly to his lip as he faces this vast gathering and is overcast by doubt whether he will be able to introduce everyone, missing no one and slighting no one.

Likewise, in minor details, we do find the designs of the drawings modified (all for the better, as it happens) in the paintings; one can take, as an example, the charming painting (Plate 4) in which Damayantī urges the painter to draw on the wall a picture of "a lover and his beloved excelling the three worlds in beauty." In the sanguine drawing the painter[78] appears twice: once, when he enters from the right with his *bastā* under his arm, his figure very prominently delineated, and the second time when he appears seated on his raised stool, engaged in drawing the picture that Damayantī regards with such love together with a *sakhī*. Apparently, when it came to finishing the painting, it must have occurred to the artist that the painter had come to occupy too prominent a place in the sanguine composi-

tion: so he made a change in the finished painting. He does still introduce the painter twice; but we see him entering now at the far end of the picture at the left with a *bastā*, drawn as a small little figure so that while the sequence of his being summoned and asked by Damayantī to paint the figures is clearly established, he does not become the principal personage in the painting: that honour belongs to Damayantī and the focus of interest continues to remain the painted pair of lovers on the wall.

Occasionally, but only occasionally, we have a scene which we find in one set and not in the other. Of the fact that there is a sanguine drawing but no corresponding painting of the same theme, not much explanation is necessary because it is entirely likely that some of the paintings were either not done or were lost and do not form a part of the collection as it now exists. One notices, for example, that there is no painting which corresponds to the sanguine drawing (No. 34) in which the invisible Nala sees Damayantī for the first time. This apparently was deemed unnecessary or redundant by the painter because in the finished picture (Plate 40) he chooses to introduce the invisible form of Nala in another painting, in the doorway at the back of the chamber where Damayantī listens to the female messenger who brings to her a garland of *pārijāta* flowers on behalf of Indra. He thus condenses two drawings into one painting. We also have a situation in which there is a painting of which we have no corresponding drawing. Thus, there is that painting (Plate 9) of the scene where, after Nala has released the swan, the swan comes back after a while and returns to the hand of Nala, offering to take his message or plead his case with Damayantī. Of this there is no corresponding drawing, and the likely explanation is that when it came to the set being painted, the painter felt the need for inserting a picture of this content to make the transition from the previous picture to the next one more obvious.

The set of sanguine drawings apart, there are in the National Museum twelve primed drawings of the Nala-Damayantī theme of which it is relevant here to speak. These are in an equally, if not more, refined hand as the Coomaraswamy drawings, and some of these one can see as being almost exact duplicates.[79] Their existence apart from, and outside of, the Coomaraswamy set constitutes a puzzle; for while one can understand the sanguine drawings as being preliminary designs for the finished set, the purport of this duplication is not clear. Only two explanations, as we see it, are possible. One, that these form a part of a full set the rest of which has been lost. Or, secondly, that they exist as a group by themselves and were not meant to be part of a larger set; they in fact served a different purpose. This latter possibility gains some weight from the evidence of the artist Chandu lal of Rajol, descendant of Paṇḍit Seu and Nainsukh, to whose family collection the set of sanguine drawings in the National Museum clearly once belonged.[80] Shri Chandu Lal says he remembers very clearly that apart from a 'full set' of Nala and Damayantī drawings that was in his ancestral collection, there was also in it a set of the *'byāh'* or wedding of Nala and Damayantī. The preparation of such small sets by artists for special occasions like a wedding in the family of the royal patron would appear to be perfectly understandable, because a set like this could be relevant to

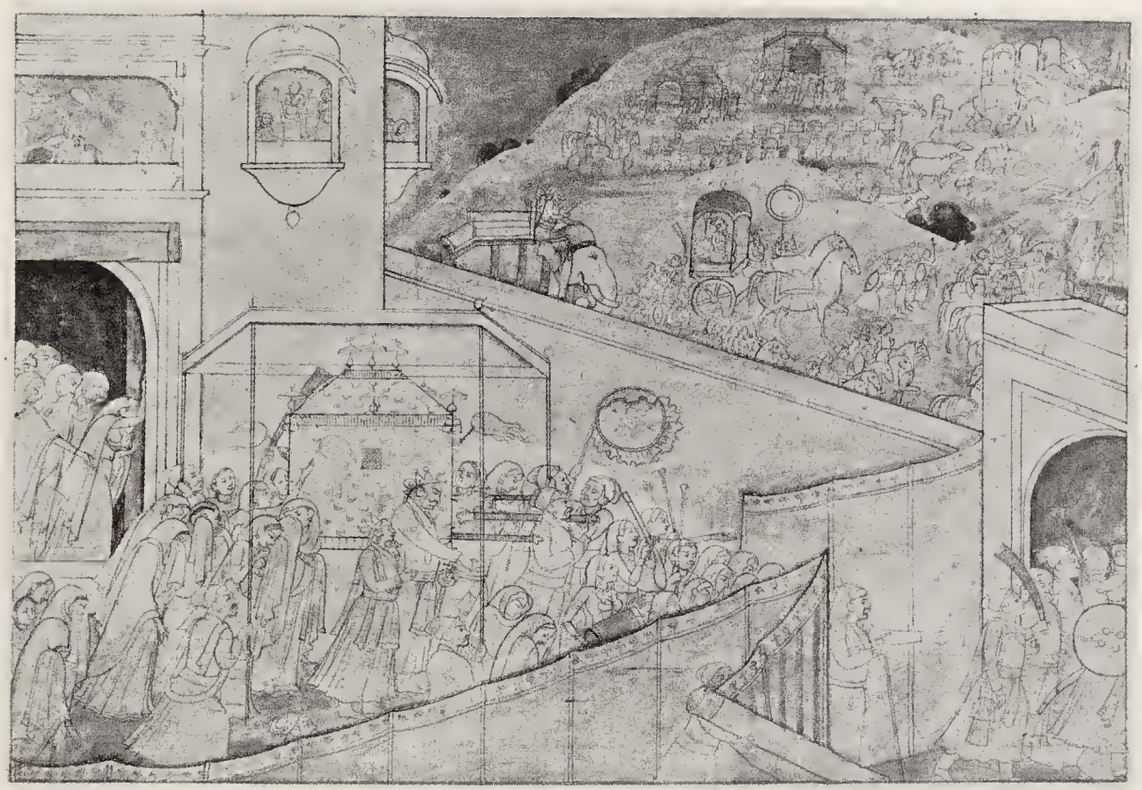


Fig. 50. The departure of Damayanti from Bhima's house. National Museum. Cf. Fig. 37 from Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

the occasion. As it happens, interestingly enough in this case, *all* the twelve primed drawings are on the theme of the wedding, from the *svayaṁvara* to the departure of Damayanti for Nala's country. It is wholly likely that these were originally in the collection of drawings from which Dr Coomaraswamy acquired his group, and became separated from it. Their versions that were in the Coomaraswamy collection would thus be 'duplicates', but this is not impossible since even otherwise there are two versions of some of the other Coomaraswamy drawings, as published by Eastman. It is not without interest to mention, however, that the National Museum primed drawings are superior to the versions of them that are in the Coomaraswamy group, which recalls to one's mind A.C. Eastman's perceptive observation that apart from duplicates, there is evidence of different hands in the set of Coomaraswamy drawings.[81]



VII

When A. C. Eastman published his admirable monograph, The *Nala-Damayatī Drawings,* in 1959, it appeared as if the last word on many matters connected with the set, matters of style and provenance, date and patronage and the like, had been said. To the early information of Dr Coomaraswamy[82] he had added a great deal; besides describing each drawing in detail and relating it to verses from the *Naiṣadhacarita,* he had discussed in a historical note these questions of art history. And there did not seem much reason for arguing his findings. Between 1959 and now, however, things have changed considerably not only because of the Karan Singh paintings having come to light but also because we now know a little more of the spread of the style in which these paintings and drawings have been done, as also of families of Pahari artists including the one which we believe was responsible for this set. All this makes it necessary for us to have another look at some of these matters.

Mr Eastman treats the drawings as belonging to the 'Kangra' School. We are of the view that the classification of styles which identifies a style with a state needs to be revised, and feel that it is necessary, and as much as it is possible, to classify Pahari painting into styles on the basis of artist families.[83] That, however, is a matter into the details of which we find it unnecessary to enter here; for the purposes of this set, Mr Eastman's description, like Dr Coomaraswamy's, could be accepted if by 'Kangra' is only meant that style of extreme refinement and elegance in which other famous sets like the *Gīta Govinda* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* referred to below have been done. It is obvious that that primitive passion which we associate with early Pahari works is not there in these paintings. The feeling here is much more gentle and luxuriant. And we are able immediately to connect this set with at least five other major sets of Pahari Painting that have all been given to Kangra thus far, including the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*;[84] the *Gīta Govinda* from the Garhwal Maharaja's collection;[85] the *Satsaī* of Biharī also from the same collection;[86] a large number of pictures of the *Rasikapriyā*[87] and, of course, the large set of *Rāgamālā* paintings.[88] There is a stylistic unity which binds these together (even though the hand varies to an extent from set to set and, sometimes, even within the same set) and we are now well familiar with the fluency of drawing, the wonderful facility with which figures are set into scenes, the facial formulas, the grouping, the colouring, the treatment of depth, the manner of rendering architecture and foliage, etc. that belong to them. All of these one finds present in these Nala-Damayantī paintings in full measure. If one misses something in these paintings, it is the green luxuriance and variety of foliage and landscape that are distinguishing features of a set like the *Gīta Govinda* and that one finds ever so often in the *plein air* pictures from the *Bhāgavata* set that are so justly famous. In these paintings, as in the set of the *Satsaī* of Biharī, it is architecture that features so prominently. It would be unfair to say that it predominates, but it does become much more a part of the picture than it does in those sylvan paintings of the *Gīta Govinda.* Much of this is unavoidable because of the setting

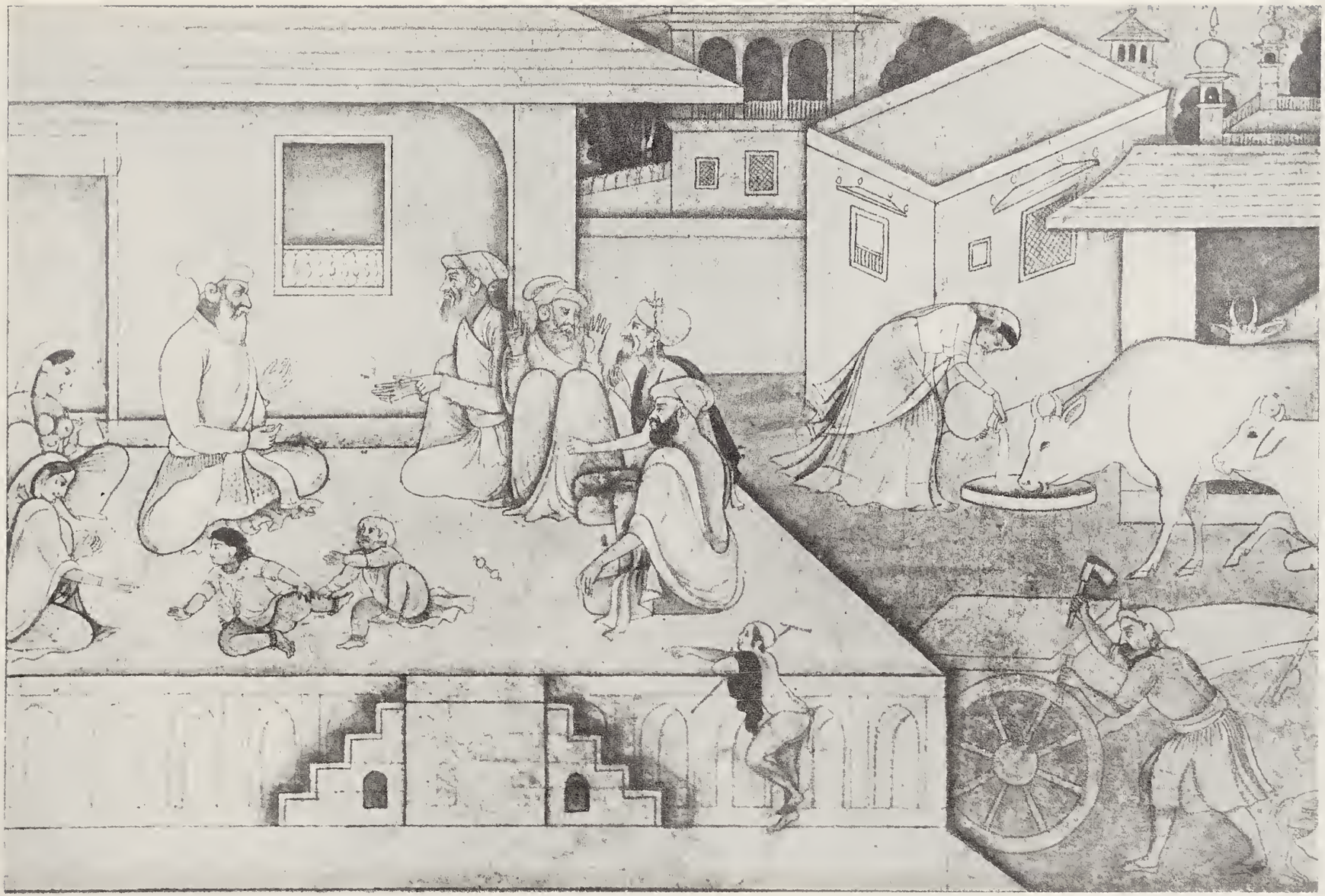


Fig. 51. Illus. to the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Pahari, late 18th century. Chandigarh Museum



Fig. 52. Illus. to the Gīta Govinda. Pahari, late 18th century. Rep. from Randhawa, Kangra Paintings of the Gīta Govinda, Fig. 5

in which the narrative is cast; but the orderliness, the straight lines of architecture, enter even the foliage here; as seen, for instance, in Nala's gardens or Damayatī's. The whole approach is too schematic, even a little dry, with parterres of flowers, or rows of cypresses interspersed with rounded trees, all forming a rigid pattern that comes as a contrast to the lush vegetation and luxuriant disorder that we find in paintings of the *Gīta Govinda* set. Only occasionally do we get a glimpse in the Nala-Damayatī set of the artist's facility in rendering foliage freely and with the same remarkable ease. One finds this, for example, in the little grove in the bottom left corner of the garden in the painting (Plate 8) where Damayantī holds her conversation with the swan; but, for the most part, the painter stays within the hard geometric lines not only of his architecture but of his overplanned gardens both on earth and in heaven.

In a sense, however, what comes as a surprise is not the lack of that great natural beauty of foliage and landscape



Fig. 53. Damayanti and the Swan. Detail from Plate 8



Fig. 54. The dancers at Nala's court. Detail from Plate 2

of which we have spoken, but the skill with which the artist is able to keep architecture from becoming too oppressive in these paintings. He was clearly faced with the difficult task of showing almost his entire action against an 'urban' palace-setting; within this, he makes the architecture dwindle as much as is possible, by employing diagonals and slender minarets and delicately carved windows covered with split-bamboo screens of floral designs. We do hear in this set the note of 'a bird singing in the open air', even if it is in a palace garden that we hear it.

The line in these paintings holds an important clue to their style and one's mind turns at this point to that striking description of the drawings that Dr Coomaraswamy gave when he first published these in 1910. "Many things are noteworthy in these drawings", he wrote.[89] "The human figure is drawn with astonishing facility in every possible seated or standing pose, indicating immense practice and well stored memory on the part of the artist. The figures are alert and eager; whole groups are animated by a single sentiment. Occasionally two or more episodes are represented in a single drawing, but more often the whole composition deals only with a single situation. The quality of the brush outline is most alluring. It is swift and effortless. In many places it attains a singular simplicity; there is a fondness for forms bounded by almost geometrical curves which again pass into nearly straight lines . . . it is indeed remarkable how apparently simple an outline carried round the whole figure, without raising the brush, avails to suggest



Fig. 55. The courtiers of Govardhan Chand. Detail, Chandigarh Museum



Fig. 56. The attendants outside Damayanti's apartment. Detail, from Plate. 34

the living form beneath the drapery; how often it happens that a far more detailed statement carries less conviction."

This is a description that applies with equal ease to all those great sets that we have mentioned.

In such small but significant things as the human types found in these paintings and drawings of the Nala-Damayantī set, we find nearly the same repertoire of figures that the artists of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* for instance, used. If one takes the types of sages and Brahmins who are seated in a corner in the *svayaṁvara* scene (Plate 47) the rulers of all kinds and descriptions who crowd the *svayaṁvara* chamber, or the maids and dancers who appear ever so often in these paintings and drawings, we find them to be almost exactly the same types as those which appear in so many paintings of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* the *Gīta Govinda,* the *Satsaī* and the *Rāgamālā.* The artist of this set makes use of the same kind of rolling mountain landscape with shrubbery disappearing far into distance to which one's eye has become accustomed. One can in fact pick up precise details which bind these paintings and those from the other sets together. The human types occur not only in the sets that we have mentioned but also in scenes at the court of Govardhan Chand of Guler,[90] for instance, or that of Balwant Singh of Jasrota.[91] One can pick up a Paṇḍit from a Nala-Damayantī painting and see him so closely related to the Paṇḍit in a Balwant Singh miniature;[92] or one can take a courtier from one of the paintings in this set and find him present in a Govardhan Chand court scene almost exactly as if he had been lifted out of there and transplanted here. This is surely not fortuitous. It goes to prove a closeness of relationship that cannot come except from being by the same hand or from the fact of a group of artists working under the direction of the same master; in this case, perhaps the head of the family.

On the question of the place where these paintings were painted and the patron for whom this set was prepared, Mr Khandalavala who wrote a sensitive appreciation[93] of the drawings and considered these matters in detail, was of the view that these were a "product of Sansar Chand's great atelier and were commenced during the period 1780-1800". But it is Mr Eastman who has a great deal to say on the subject in the historical note which forms a part of his monograph. He goes into some length over a description of the court of Sansar Chand of Kangra, one of the greatest rulers of the hills. He examines the antecedents of Sansar Chand, his personality, his descent from a hero of the *Mahābhārata,* the ritual at his court, the record left of him by near-contemporaries like Bute Shah, the Punjab historian,[94] and by Moorcroft, the English traveller who stayed with him for some time.[95] He pays close attention to the architecture of the palaces, now in ruins, of Sansar Chand, both at Alampur and Tira-Sujanpur; and goes into the question of the history of Sansar Chand up to the point of the early 19th century. This record is examined by Mr Eastman because, he believes, "it is of high documentary importance from the view point of the Nala-Damayantī drawings, for it tells us that Moorcroft saw this series and they form a part of the Raja's collection". Of the by no means clear evidence of Moorcroft on the presence of these very paintings and drawings in the Raja's collection, we treat in a note below.[96] But Mr Eastman

also goes enthusiastically into the question of identifying Sansar Chand with the figure of Nala, concluding that in fact in these drawings Nala is only "a disguise for Sansar Chand". He sees much that is common between the two figures. Sansar Chand, according to him, "was a great patron of poets, scholars and artists, and it is known that poets read to him from the epics and the romantic literature of India, just as poets and scholars read to Nala in the first miniature. As a patron of the arts, as an administrator, a warrior, a worshipful ruler devoted to his gods and especially as one whose generosity and fame were widespread through Kangra, Sansar Chand could be likened to the hero of the *Naiṣadhīyacarita,* the same who appears in the *Mahābhārata*. Nala's fame was universal because of these same qualities".

Mr Eastman goes on further in the same strain. He sees significance in the fact the Nala traced his descent from one of the major deities: so also did Sansar Chand, a fact substantiated by Moorcroft. He even believes that the Raja's interest in the *Mahābhārata* was strong because the "Epic speaks of the Katoch clan, to which Sansar Chand belonged . . . Sansar Chand, a Katoch Raja, no doubt saw himself as not only related to the very founders of Kangra, but through them to a hero of the *Mahābhārata.* This was possibly an important factor in Sansar Chand's interest in requesting his artist to record pictures of the epic of Nala and Damayantī". Mr Eastman also believes that "it is not impossible that Sansar Chand's beautiful wife, Nokhu, can be identified with Damayantī. The age was a highly romantic one and it seems hardly likely therefore that Sansar Chand would have allowed himself to have been identified with the hero, Nala, unless Damayantī should have also served as a disguise for his queen". Again: "To recapitulate: in the context of Sansar Chand as a wise and generous sovereign, skilled in the arts of warfare, in cultural arts as well, devoted to his gods, and finally as a ruler whose family had founded Kangra and played an important part in the epic of the *Mahābhārata,* one may well imagine the Raja succumbing to the flattering suggestion of being represented disguised as Nala in the first miniature of the series. Moreover, his flatterers probably likened the Raja's virtues and accomplishments, emphasizing his generosity, (for such he had indeed), to those of Nala. Nala's fame spread far and wide; '. . .the circle of his fame serving as a white umbrella for him'. So also did Sansar Chand's."

Mr Eastman even sees a physical resemblance between Nala as depicted in the drawings and Sansar Chand specially in his portrait where he is interviewing artists and appears beardless. The portraits of Sansar Chand "suggest an idealistic and sensitive youth", and this, Mr Eastman says, "is the concept of Nala in our miniature, and the resemblance between this portrait, presumably, adapted from life, and that of Nala is clearly striking".

But the heaviest reliance that Mr Eastman places in considering the matter of these drawings coming from the court of Sansar Chand, is on the painting that he reproduces as the frontispiece in colour, and which he describes as *Nala in Council with Poets and Scholars*. In that painting there stands outside the double-storeyed pavilion, a rather unusual figure which was described by Dr Coomaraswamy as

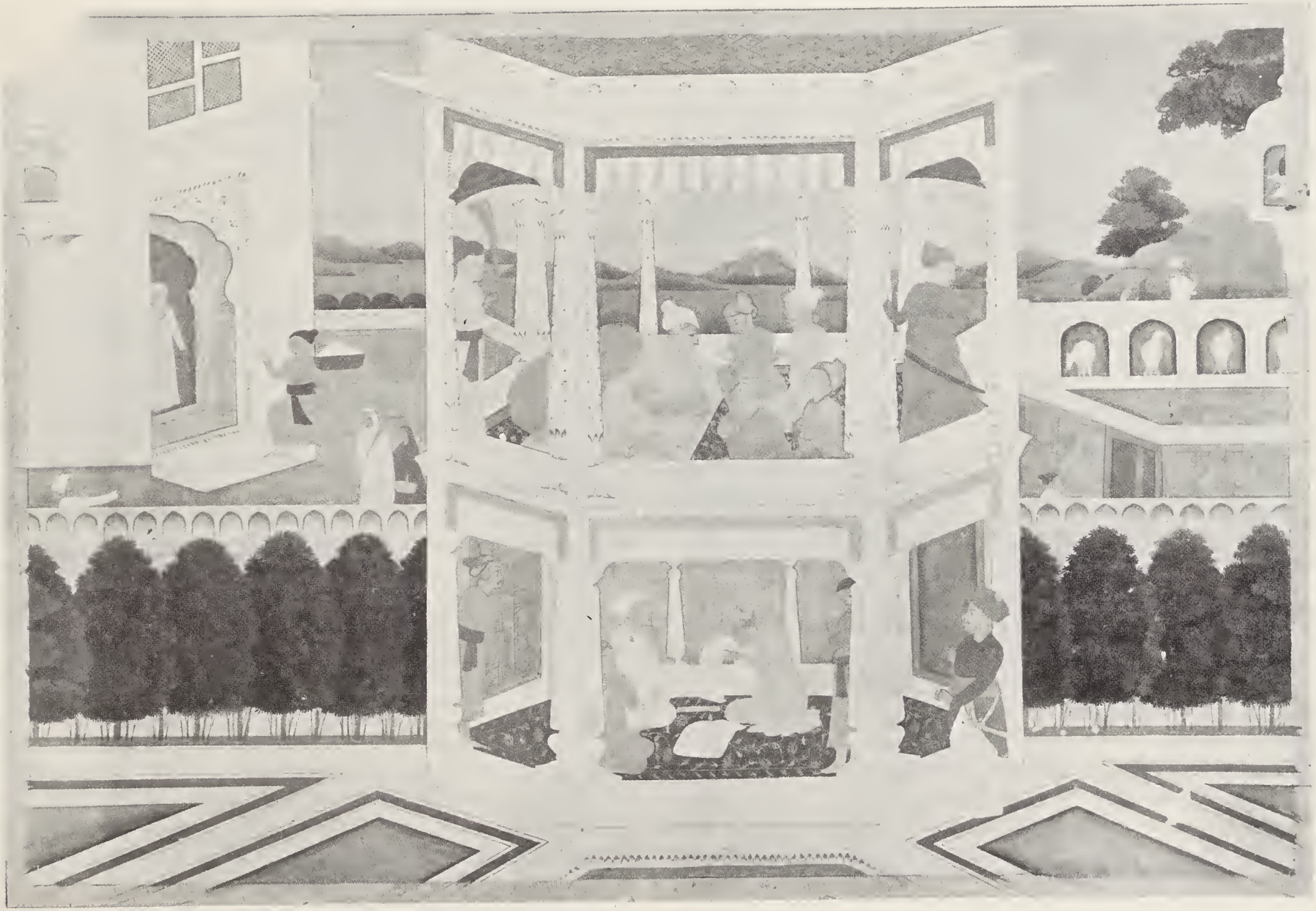


Fig. 57. Nala in council with poets and scholars. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

a "Georgian figure", and treated by him as "the only European suggestion in the series."[97] This figure, wearing a blue cap and orange tunic, with a broad blue sash and white breeches and shoes is noticed very carefully by Mr Eastman; and he arrives, after consideration, at the conclusion that this figure is none other perhaps than the Irish adventurer William O'Brien who was a deserter from the British army and came and sought refuge with Sansar Chand, later becoming a trusted lieutenant and training for his new patron an army along European lines.[98] O'Brien was noticed at the court of Sansar Chand by Moorcroft and we do of course know of his presence there from other sources too. Concluding, then, that it is Sansar Chand who appears as Nala in the first painting and it is he who has throughout been presented in disguise as Nala, Eastman sees special significance in "this figure with a Georgian costume" because he believes it to be O'Brien and thus finds it certain evidence of the link of this set with the court of Sansar Chand.

Then Mr Eastman mentions some incidental details like architecture. The architecture and apartments in the miniatures of *Niṣadha,* he believes, "could well be modelled after many of those at Sujanpur and perhaps Nadaun". Again, the "manufactory of carpets" at Tira could possibly have supplied the rug seen in the miniature, *Nala in Council.* He even sees significance in the three horses in the stable in the painting of *Nala in Council* because he feels that these "could easily refer to the favourite horses of both Sansar Chand and perhaps O' Brien, in which case the stable and wall place the locale in Sujanpur where O'Brien's troops were quartered". Then: "There remains a final documentary reference in this miniature to the boundaries of Sansar Chand's kingdom. This is the Śaiva icon in the middle distance. Besides symbolising Nala's descent from Śiva, it could easily be also a reference to the extent of Sansar Chand's Kingdom". Speaking of its extent, Moorcroft says: ". . .'The greatest breadth is from . . . *Iśwar Linga,* a shrine of Śiva, and a place of religious resort in the north-east, adjacent to Kulu and Mandi'. . ." Rounding off this part, Mr Eastman says: "Thus, we have in the figure of O'Brien, and in the pavilion and garden, in the carpet, the wall, the stable with its horses and in the Śiva icon, a large number of references which appear to refer directly to Sansar Chand, his court and his kingdom quite as clearly as they do to Niṣadha". All this also helps Mr Eastman in dating the drawings, because he is able to pin down precisely the date of the arrival of O'Brien at the court of Sansar Chand; because of his presence in the *Nala in Council* picture, then, he is of the view that the entire series must have been done between the years 1810 to 1814. This last year is brought in because in this year O'Brien is said to have had a slight falling out with the Raja, and got into touch with Col. Ochterlony again, offering his services to the British on condition of being granted pardon.

All this does undoubtedly sound impressive, but unfortunately not much of it stands close scrutiny. Most of the points that are made towards the identification of Nala of these drawings with Sansar Chand could be true not only of Sansar Chand but of many a major ruler of a Pahari state. Many of these rulers had won fame and certainly many of them were warriors of considerable repute, because the

history of hill states is nothing if not the history of persistent wars between these chiefs; we know of persistent struggle between the chiefs thus of Basohli and Chamba, of Nurpur and Basohli, or Chamba and Kangra, and so on. We also have the names of several hill chiefs to whom legend ascribes much bravery, and it is by no means Sansar Chand alone who can lay claim to the title of fame on this score. The point that Sansar Chand was descended from a deity, tracing back his proud descent some four hundred generations, is not necessarily applicable exclusively to Sansar Chand, for a great many rulers of the hill states, being either of the Chandravaṁśī or the Sūryavaṁśī clans of Rajputs, could trace back their descents to a deity in similar fashion.[99] To take only one example, the detailed genealogical table which the historian of the Panjab Hills, Thakur Kahan Singh Balauria, appends of the rulers of Basohli, goes back far into the past and links the family with Viṣṇu himself.[100] Undoubtedly this is also true of a number of other families in the hills. Certainly it is true of the house of Guler because, after all, as both history and legend tell us, the houses of Guler and Kangra are essentially branches of the same house which split somewhere in the 14th century.[101] The ancestors, therefore, of the rulers of Guler were much the same as those of the rulers of Kangra like Sansar Chand. Again, the description of Sansar Chand and his court is something that would hold true possibly of many a famed ruler of the hills. One has only to turn to a detailed account like that of the reign of Ranjit Dev of Jammu in the *Rājadarśanī,* a Persian account, which ascribes to Ranjit Dev at least as many, if not more, virtues as are credited to the name of Sansar



Fig. 58. Nala. Detail, from Plate 45



Fig. 59. Sansar Chand. Chandigarh Museum

Chand.[102] This account should be at least as credible as that of Bute Shah, who, like the writer of the *Rājadarśanī* in the 19th century, was writing of a reign from a former generation. If one looks at things carefully, it would appear that it was customary for the poets, and for the bards who were most often paid retainers of the rulers, to ascribe to their patron every conceivable virtue; hyperbole was their stock in trade. We have celebrated figures, from Jagat Singh of Nurpur whose glories were sung in a brilliant panegyric by his court poet, Gambhir Rai,[103] to Amrit Pāl of Basohli with whom is associated personal bravery, patronage of learning, and much piety (because it was this ruler who handed

over his kingdom to his son and became a recluse at Benares where he died).[104] This ruler, it must be remembered, was also the patron of Nainsukh, the painter, son of Paṇḍit Seu, as a Haridwar *bahī* tells us. A colophon at the end of a *Sundra Śriṅgāra* manuscript painted in 1794 at the court of Pritam SIngh of Kulu, presumably by the artist Bhagwan, again sings the ruler's praises along well-established lines,[105] as does a colophon which relates to Kirpāl Pāl of Basohli and describes him as "One who turns his mind towards the *Dharmaśāstra,* . . .who is a devotee of Viṣṇu, . . . who fulfils the wishes of everyone, through generosity, and who is a bitter foe of his rivals.[106]"

There is, it might thus be seen, nothing exceptional about the character of Sansar Chand as summed up by Mr Eastman. Whether the description is correct or not is a different matter, but even if it is correct— and we must take



Fig. 60. Amrit Pāl of Basohli. Karan Singh Collection



Fig. 61. Vijay Pāl of Basohli. Karan Singh Collection

into serious account the evidence of Moorcroft—one is not certain that the same thing cannot be said similarly of other rulers. The least acceptable of the suggestions made in this context by Mr Eastman is the identification of Nokhu, the wife of Sansar Chand, with Damayantī, on the ground simply that "the age was a highly romantic one". If one takes into account the background of the so-called 'romance' between Sansar Chand and Nokhu, it becomes obvious that such an identification would be wholly untenable. Nokhu was not a legally married wife of Sansar Chand, as the legend tells us.[107] She was a *gaddan,* wife of a poor shepherd, whose beauty attracted Sansar Chand on one occasion and who was forcibly brought home by him. The only memory that the folk in Kangra possess of Nokhu is not either of her beauty or of her devotion to Sansar Chand, but of her sad longing for going back to her simple life of the days when she lived with her husband and tended her sheep and goats. The folk-songs which have Nokhu as their theme show her constantly as a tragic figure, unhappy and ill-at-ease in the palace of Sansar Chand. There is no *romance* as such, then, of Sansar Chand and Nokhu. We know only of Sansar Chand lusting after a beauty whom he appreciated and kept with himself, apparently against her wish. To identify Nokhu, then, with Damayantī would be to misunderstand either Damayantī or Nokhu.

As for the resemblance between the figure of Sansar Chand in one of his youthful portraits and his appearance in the Nala-Damayantī drawings, especially in the *Nala in Council* scene, the matter again is by no means free from doubt. This resemblance is difficult to see because Sansar Chand, as he appears in his portraits, was heavy of build and had a chubby face.[108] He had a certain handsomeness, but the frame of Nala as seen in these paintings appears to be much slighter than that of Sansar Chand and he has a far more athletic figure than Sansar Chand cuts in many of his portraits. Another thing again that one prominently misses in the Nala figure, if he is to be treated as a "disguise for Sansar Chand", is the distinctive Sansar Chand turban. It is not inconceivable that a figure in a romance should be modelled upon a prince in real life, but then in such a case a certain care is taken cleverly to introduce some suggestive details. It is interesting, in this context, to notice that there are paintings in which the *nāyaka* seems to have been modelled on Sansar Chand, wearing distinctly the same kind of turban and placed in a familiar situation of love. One such painting that comes easily to mind is reproduced by W.G. Archer in *Indian Miniatures*,[109] in which the *nāyaka* is looking towards a heroine from behind a latticed window in his upper apartment. There is absolutely no mistaking there of the style of the turban worn by the *nāyaka:* we recognise it as the same that Sansar Chand and his brothers wear in the series of portraits from that court. The turban worn by Nala is nowhere close to that worn by Sansar Chand in real life and this, combined with the considerable wiriness of Nala's frame as contrasted with the heaviness of Sansar Chand's, makes this identification, or "disguise", highly doubtful. If anything, the figure that comes to one's mind upon seeing Nala is of one of the rulers of Basohli, like Amrit Pāl or Vijay Pāl of whom we have inscribed portraits in the Karan Singh collection again.[110]

The point of this series of arguments is simply this: that possibly too much has been seen by Mr Eastman in the matter of a resemblance between Nala and Sansar Chand. Whatever accounts we have do not make it possible for us to see Sansar Chand as sharply distinguished from many other rulers of the hill areas of his own times or even slightly earlier. His is the idealised picture of a Pahari ruler as established through eulogies written by court poets and bards; a picture like this comes out with ease from the general cultural milieu of which both the *Naiṣadhacarita* on the one hand, and the paintings of the Pahari area on the other, are products.



Fig. 62. The Georgian figure



Fig. 63. O'Brien playing Holi



Fig. 63. O'Brien's soldiers. Detail from painting in Chandigarh Museum

Serious attention is deserved by the contention of Mr Eastman that the figure in the 'Georgian' costume in the first painting that he reproduces, *Nala in Council,* is that of O'Brien, This, again, however, is a suggestion which does not come out very well from a close examination of evidence. Mr Eastman who pays attention to the costume worn by this figure believes that this was "a costume designed by O'Brien himself for Sansar Chand's troops consisting of a blue helmet, scarlet coat, 'fringed by a yellow border' and 'tight fitting knickers', and this is identical with the costume worn by the officer in the miniature of *Nala in Council with the Poets and Scholars".* Once again it appears that too much has been seen by Mr Eastman even in this costume.

For it is obvious that the cap which this Georgian figure wears is not a blue *helmet;* the coat is not scarlet but is orange and does not have a fringe of a yellow border; what the figure wears on the lower part of the body is not 'tight knickers' but simply long white breeches or trousers. The correspondence of the costume designed by O'Brien with that worn by this Georgian figure is thus by no means complete. On the other hand, we have a large painting from a festive procession from the court of Sansar Chand[111] in which we do actually see some soldiers dressed almost exactly in the same costume as is described in these words. The soldiers form a long row and there we do see the blue helmet, the tight fitting knickers and the scarlet coats, much nearer the verbal description. The figure of O'Brien, once again, is different from that of this Georgian figure, because in the portrait that we have of him in the large Holī scene at the court of Sansar Chand,[112] to which Mr Eastman refers, O'Brien distinctly wears a small goatee beard which does not belong to the face of Georgian figure. Also, the general impression given by that figure of O'Brien is of his being a relatively short man, whereas the Georgian figure is of a reasonably good height and build. A point that is missed by Mr Eastman is that a European in the hills was not such a rare figure as at first might strike one. In the early 19th century we have many of them—Moocroft, Trebeck, Jacquemont, Vigne, Hugel, Soltykoff—travelling across and leaving a record of their journeys and observations. In the 18th century, Forster traversed much territory in the hills, even if in disguise. Then, surely, there must have been many more who did not commit to writing what they saw and are therefore not equally well-known. This apart, a European military dress worn by a soldier in the hills could not have been an altogether uncommon sight. Too much attention has been focussed on O'Brien because of his colourful career. He was not the only European soldier even at the court of Sansar Chand; there were, besides him, at least two more, James and Macdonald, of whom we know with certainty.[113] Again, a document in the National Archives of India tells up of a company of soldiers trained (and thus presumably dressed) in European fashion that was a part of the army of the Raja of Mandi.[114] We also, of course, know of the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Lahore, in which soldiers were dressed in European fashion[115] from the first decade of the 19th century: the generals whom we generally hear of—Allard, Avitabile, Court, Ventura and others—came later. And between Lahore and the hill states commerce was indeed active. There would be nothing unlikely therefore in the people in the hills at least having *seen* 'Georgian figures' of a sort. To identify, therefore, *this* Georgian figure definitely as O'Brien is to concede more to imagination than to fact.

The matter of the identification of this figure apart, we wonder if the painting *Nala in Council* really even belongs to the series to which Mr Eastman devotes his monograph. He believes that the scene portrays *Nala in Council with Poets and Scholars*. Significantly, Dr Coomaraswamy had identified this scene differently; he did not mention poets or scholars but referred to a clerk's office in the picture which is to be seen in the lower story of the pavilion in the painting.[116] When Mr Eastman identifies it as showing *Nala in Council with Poets and Scholars,* he, it might be noted, is

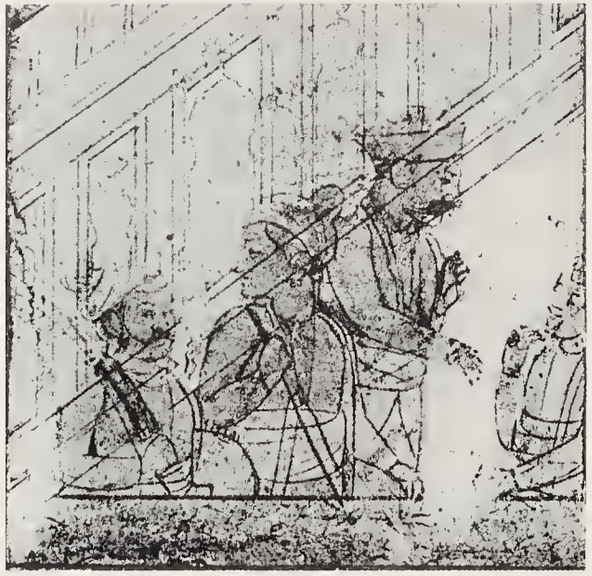


Fig. 65. Detail, from Eastman, Fig. 44



Fig. 66. The Prince smoking. Detail, from Eastman Fig. 44

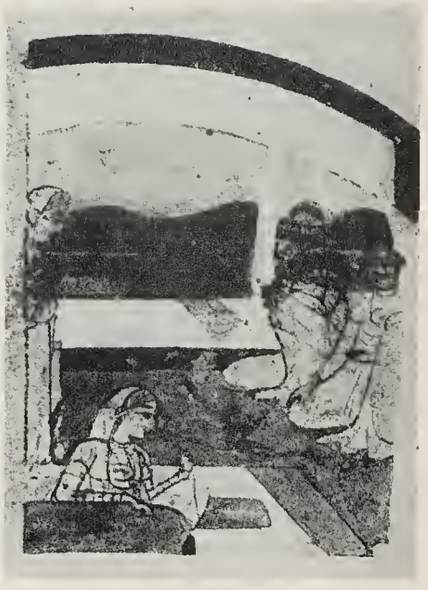


Fig. 67. The Rānī smoking. Detail, from Eastman, Fig. 44

not able to quote a relevant corresponding verse from the text of Śrīharṣa, something that he does in nearly every other case.[117] Also relevant is the fact that "the glory of Nala's court" is not mirrored in this picture, which represents only a ruler in animated conversation, as would be indicated by his raised finger, with a small intimate group of persons on the upper storey. The whole point of Śrīharṣa in the opening few verses of his text is to establish the pomp and grandeur of the court of Nala; and that grandeur is captured in the finished paintings of the set we have now in the Karan Singh collection (Plate 1). It is in paintings 1,2,5 and 6 that we find some reflection of that glory and not in a scene like that which is reproduced by Mr Eastman. Fairly obviously, if any one picture has to be taken as representing '*Nala in Council with Poets and Scholars'*, it is either No. 1 or No. 5 of the finished paintings rather than the *Nala in Council* picture which will come nearest to the description of Nala's court by Śrīharṣa. There is even more to the matter than this. When Dr Coomaraswamy published his drawings alongwith this partly finished painting in 1926, he mentioned that this particular unfinished picture of the palace of Nala bore "No. 14 of the original series.[118]" If this is so, it becomes extremely difficult to link it with the set of drawings which begins, as we know, with No. 51 as mentioned by

Dr Coomaraswamy himself. We will then have this peculiar situation of an unfinished painting bearing No. 14, and relating to the first few verses of the first canto of Śrīharṣa's *Naiṣadhacarita,* followed by a long gap and then continuing with a drawing bearing No. 51 to go on with the story from the point of *svayaṁvara* of Damayantī onwards. While, surely, there is a possibility of the intervening pictures being lost, it is the number 14 of this painting which is more difficult to explain. Because if it is true that this shows '*Nala in Council with Poets and Scholars*', then one has to think of thirteen other pictures before it in the same set, and the small number of verses in Śrīharṣa's text before this point simply would not warrant that.

To our way of thinking, this painting, which we consider in style slightly inferior to the finished paintings that we now have and even to the drawings reproduced by Eastman and Coomaraswamy, is not a part of the same set at all. Admittedly, it is a product of the same family of artists which was responsible for the Nala-Damayantī pictures, but the hand involved here is not equally refined; thus it is possible to discern even though the figures are unfinished in this particular painting. We regard this painting on the other hand as belonging to a totally different series, having nothing to do with the story of Nala and Damayantī. In this connection we find another drawing, reproduced by Mr Eastman as plate 44 in his book, of great interest. That drawing is identified as "Nala and Damayantī in separate pavilions entertained by dancers and musicians", and he takes this as a variant of the one he reproduces as No. 43 which shows "Nala with Damayantī in a pavilion entertained by musicians". Mr Eastman here has a problem because he is not able to link this drawing precisely with any verse, unlike the drawing which precedes. He says:[119] "The verse quoted in this note appears to be the only interpretation possible, though admittedly not a good one, since the verse suggests that only women are present in the playing. Here the men play, the women dance."

But there is more than this here also. In this drawing the women form a separate group far in the distance where a lady presides over the dance performance and Nala is seated with his courtiers in the upper chamber where a dance is in progress. What has not apparently been noticed in this drawing is that here again we have a figure which wears the kind of "Georgian costume" worn by the figure in the frontispiece of Eastman's book. This figure forms a part of the small group outside the pavilion at the bottom where three soldiers are seen standing. It is the tallest of the three and wears the same kind of rounded cap, not a turban; a tunic or coat which opens in front just below the sash; and a crossed belt a little like the one which is worn by the Georgian figure in the *Nala in Council* picture. There is no mistaking the costume worn, even though the figure may be conceivably of a different person. Another thing which is noticeable in this drawing is that the ruler, who is taken to be Nala by Mr Eastman, is not only of a slightly heavier build than Nala in other drawings but also seems to be smoking a hookah. His right hand is unmistakably raised in the manner suggesting the holding of the stem of a hookah by so many personages of rank in other Pahari paintings, even though one cannot see the hookah itself in this somewhat

faint and unfinished picture. Even the lady in the chamber in the distance seems to be holding her hand in a similar fashion, presumably also smoking a hookah. This, as we see it, is highly significant, because if both the king and he lady are smoking hookahs then this drawing does not belong to the Nala-Damayantī series, certainly not the present one.

The matter may appear to be trifling to begin with, but consistently the Pahari painter refuses to show a religious or mythological figure smoking a hookah as far as we know.[120] This is true not only of the present series of paintings and drawings, or of the series of sanguine drawings in the National Museum, but of the whole range of Pahari painting. The painter was clearly aware that the showing of a religious or a mythological figure with a hookah would not only offend against good taste but would also be seriously 'anachronistic'. If, therefore, the principal figure in No. 44 is the portrait of a Pahari ruler and not of Nala, then the figure in the Georgian costume below becomes certainly relevant. Because then it connects itself with the unfinished painting of *Nala in Council* and one sees these two belonging together to a series of court scenes, possibly showing Raja Mahendra Pāl of Basohli of whom we have other portraits also ,[121] and thus different from the Nala-Damayantī paintings and drawings. The *Nala in Council* picture in any case, like this drawing No. 44 which is also partly coloured, goes out of consideration as far as the present set of paintings and drawings is concerned. And with this the entire argument of that Georgian figure being O'Brien, thus linking this set with the court of Sansar Chand and with the dates between 1810 and 1814, becomes exceedingly weak. The question of placing this set again becomes open.

Much of the argument above might appear to be negative and would have been unnecessary if the suggestions made by Mr Eastman had not been so strong. It was also perhaps unnecessary because we see the paintings as being clearly in the style of the Nainsukh family, a style which has been examined in some detail before and with which we are now familiar. But these and some other factual matters must be considered in same detail.

Against the series of assumptions of Mr Eastman leading to the identification of Nala with Sansar Chand and the linking of this set with the Kangra court, we now have a set of other facts, which were not known earlier either to Dr Commaraswamy or to Mr Eastman, and of which we must take cognizance. Among these facts is that the present group of paintings was presented by Pahda Kunjlal of Basohli, from whose family so many of the paintings of that centre have come, to Dr Karan Singh in 1950.[122] These paintings were apparently not acquired or purchased by the Pahda from anywhere else; they had been in the family for long, possibly having been passed on to an ancestor of his by a ruler of Basohli. The Pahda family has, in the last twenty-five years, come to be regarded as being vitally associated with the paintings of that state.[123] Apart from several very important sets of paintings that have come out of their collection, they had, till lately, much else in their possession. A singularly important and old letter written by a painter to his royal patron was in the family of Pahda Jagan Nath, a collateral of Padha Kunjlal;[124] besides other things of interest, this branch of the family also had in its collection,

when last seen, a whole set of Kṛṣṇa-Sudāmā pictures. This family of learned physicians had obviously stood in close relationship to the rulers of Basohli, and it is wholly likely that when the state of Basohli was over-run in the early years of the 19th century and the royal line there became extinct, much of the material passed into the hands of some members of this family who were living at that time. The one fact of importance in this context, therefore, is that these paintings were in *Basohli* for nearly a century and a half in the possession of this family. Undoubtedly, the mere mention of the name of Basohli evokes visions of images of power, in a totally different style of painting than 'Kangra'. But by now we know that the state of Basohli is not to be linked with paintings in what has been described as the Basohli style alone. Clearly, from the middle of the 18th century onwards, Basohli had become another centre of painting in the style generally associated with Guler and Kangra. This was apparently owing to the migration there of a branch of the celebrated artist family of Paṇḍit Seu, and his sons Manak and Nainsukh. In this connection, we have recently had evidence of the greatest possible interest. In a *bahī* in the possession of the family of Sardar Ram Rakha at Haridwar, there is an entry made in the hand of the priest or *Paṇḍā,*[125] recording that Nainsukh the painter went on a journey to Jagannāth in the company of Raja Amrit Pāl of Basohli. The date of the entry is S. 1820 (AD 1763). While we know that Nainsukh was earlier attached to Balwant Singh of Jasrota for whom he did some brilliant pictures,[126] we also know from this very source that by this date Balwant Singh was dead. While an entry in the hand of Nainsukh himself in the *bahī* simply records that he came to Haridwar in the year S. 1820 on the first of Jyeṣṭha,[127] at the bottom of his entry there is another one by the *paṇḍit* (who generally prepares a gist of the entry made by the pilgrim and adds some more information) stating that Nainsukh had come to Haridwar alongwith the remains of Raja Balwant Singh of Jasrota. If, then, Balwant Singh was dead at this time, Nainsukh must have entered the service of Amrit Pāl of Basohli since he was coming on a pilgrimage in the entourage of that ruler. The connection between him and Amrit Pāl



Fig. 68. Mahendra Pāl of Basohli. Karan Singh Collection

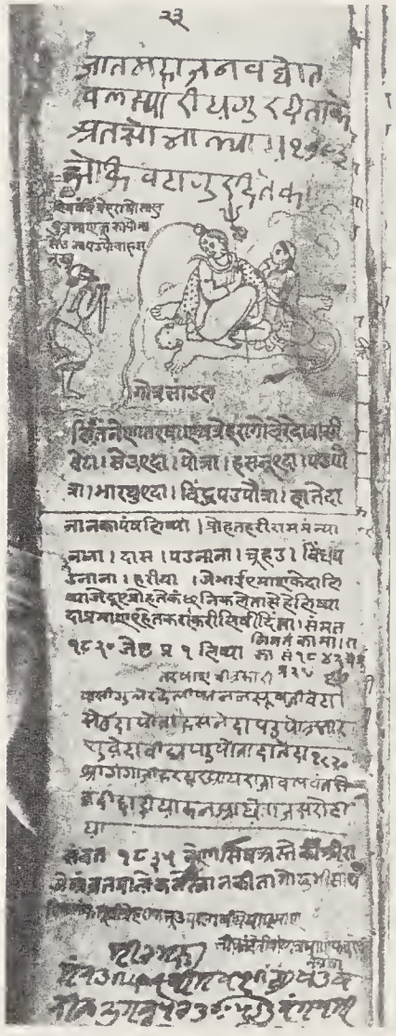


Fig. 69. Haridwar Bahi with Nainsukh's entry

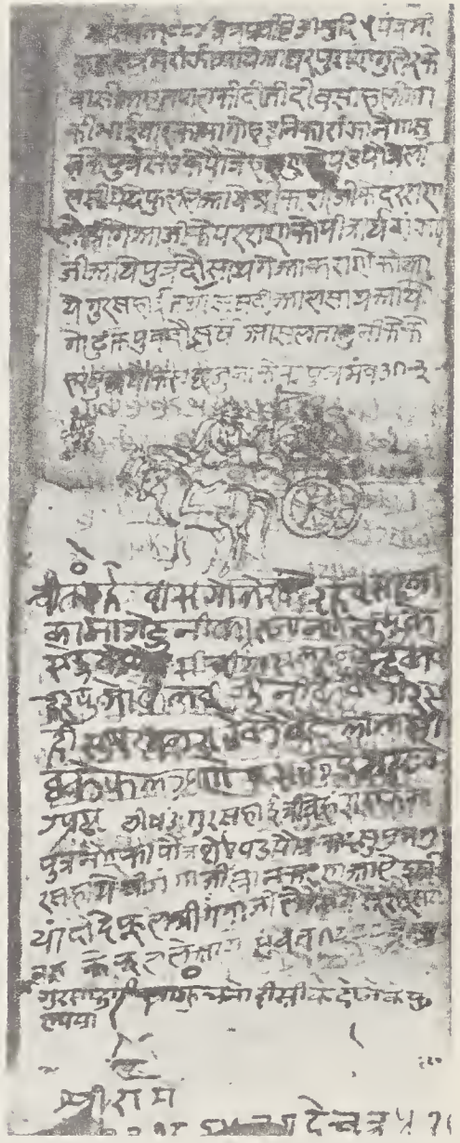


Fig. 70. Kurukṣetra Bahi with Ranjha's entry

is again brought out by another entry on the same leaf of the *bahī* which is dated AD 1778 (S. 1835). The import of that entry is not entirely clear to us yet, but the name of Raja Amrit Pāl is clearly mentioned in it in relationship with that of Nainsukh. Possibly the entry records the remains of Nainsukh having been brought in that year to Haridwar.

We have still more evidence on the connection of the Seu family with Basohli. Ranjha, the youngest son of Nainsukh, came on a pilgrimage both to Kurukṣetra and Haridwar in S. 1884 (AD 1827) and recorded this. He came accompanied by his two sons, Gursahai and Sukhdayal, on a long journey to other places of pilgrimage including Gaya and Benares, and made an entry in the *bahī* of a priest at Kurukṣetra, as follows.[128]

> *"Śrī Guru Caraṇ kamalebhyo namah. Śrī Saṁvat 1884 cetra praviṣṭe 21 sudī panchami Kurukṣetra men Rānjhā āyā. Ghar purāne Guler Ke Bāsi Amrit Pāl ki diti dī Basohliyā kī. Bhāī chār, Kāmā, Gaudhu, Nikkā, Rānjhā, Nainsukh ke putra, Seu ke potre, Hasnu ke parpotre. Lālsingh de phul liyāye. Śrī Kāśi ji ke darśan ko Śrī Gayā ji ke parśan ko pitrārth Rānjhā ji āye. Putra do sāth Gayā karāne ko āye, Gursahāi tathā Sukhdayāl sāth āye. Gaudhu ke putra do, Sukhiā, Sultānu; Nikke ke: Harakhu, Gokul, Chhajju, Nikke ke putra, S. . ."*

This, in literal translation, would read like this:

"I bow to the auspicious lotus feet of the Guru. The auspicious samvat 1884 (A.D. 1827), the 21st of the month of Caitra, the fifth day of the bright half of the

lunar month. Ranjha came to Kurukṣetra. Natives of Purāna (old) Guler, settled in Basohli on the gift (of land) given by (Raja) Amrit Pāl. Four brothers, Kāmā, Gaudhu, Nikkā and Rānjhā, sons of Nainsukh, grandsons of Seu, great grandsons of Hasnu.

"Brought the relics of Lalsingh. Ranjha came in the course of a journey of pilgrimage to the holy city of Kāśī (Benares) and the (holy) city of Gayā (in Bihar), for the sake of the peace of the departed souls of his ancestors. Two sons came with him to take him round on this 'Gayā pilgrimage': Gursahāi and Sukhdayāl (the sons) came with him. Gaudhu (has) two sons, Sukhiā and Sultānu; Nikkā (has) Harkhu, Gokul and Chhajju. Sons of Nikkā. . ."

This leaves one in very little doubt that this branch of the family of Paṇḍit Seu had settled in Basohli. The fact that Ranjha mentioned their living on land gifted by Raja Amrit Pāl, again, is significant because of the connection of Nainsukh with Raja Amrit Pāl that we have seen before. Presumably, this land was gifted originally by Amrit Pāl to Nainsukh and it was on the same piece of land that Ranjha continued to live in Basohli where his son Gursahai also continued to live and work. We also have evidence from pictures that this family was working at Basohli. We have a series of portraits in the style of this family not only of Amir Pāl and the rulers who followed him including Vijay Pāl and Mahendra Pāl, but also of ancestors of Amrit Pāl, based presumably upon earlier portraits in a different style.[129] Also, we have the clear evidence that Ranjha produced an extensive series of sanguine drawings of the Rāmāyaṇa at Basohli numbering more than 700, and now in the Bharat Kala Bhavan at Benares.[130] The conclusion to be drawn from all this is that from the time of Amrit Pāl, at least from 1763 onwards, till about 1827 when Ranjha makes his entry in the *bahī*, this branch of the family was stationed in Basohli, had made Basohli its home[131] and was obviously producing works for the rulers of that state. These facts, combined with our general awareness of the style of the Seu-Nainsukh family, lead one clearly then to the suggestion that the present set of paintings and drawings was produced by one of the members of this gifted family at Basohli itself for a Basohli ruler.

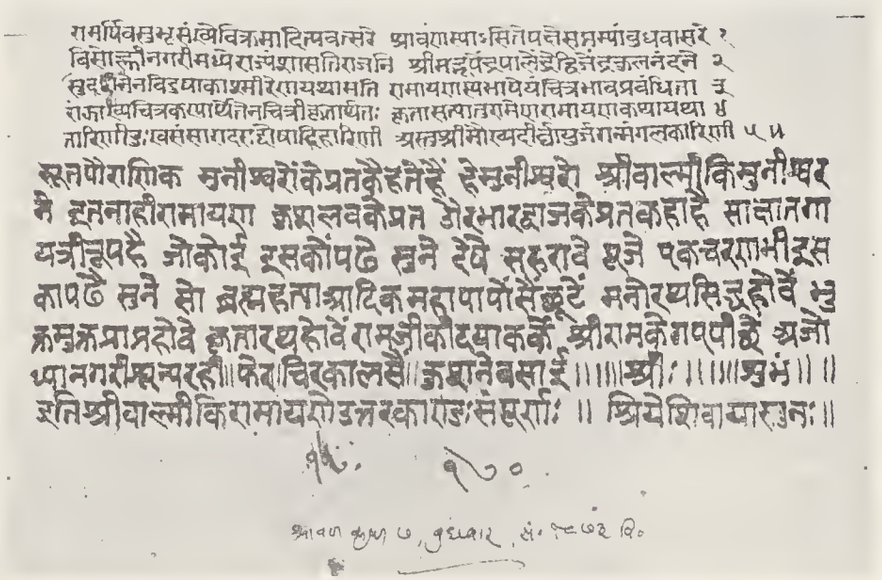


Fig. 71. Colophon of Ranjha's Rāmāyaṇa set. Bharat Kala Bhavan



Fig. 72. Illus. to the Rāmāyaṇa probably by Gursahai. Karan Singh Collection

The point that now remains to be considered is as to who did these paintings and drawings, at what time, and for which ruler. Mr Eastman considers the question of the attribution of the Coomaraswamy set to a master-artist very cautiously and even though he says that "one might speculate that Purkhu could have been the guiding hand", he adds that "far more substantial material is needed before any serious attribution can be made." Purkhu (of Kangra) is mentioned[132] because of the "remarkable clearness of tone and delicacy of handling" to which Mr Baden-Powell referred, but then this verbal description is applicable to a great many Pahari artists and is generally



Fig. 74. Portrait of Ranjha. Central Museum, Lahore

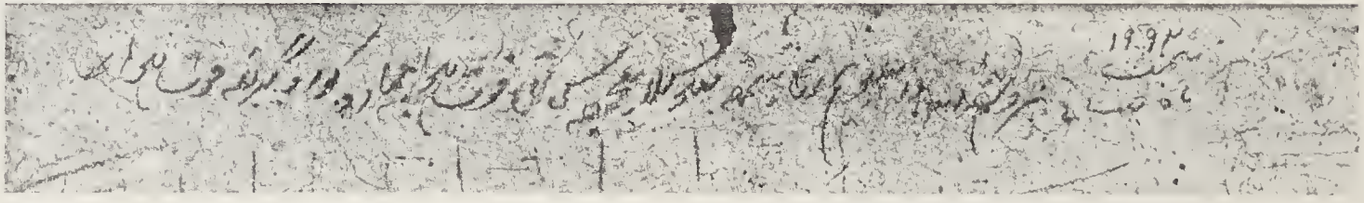


Fig. 75. Note inscribed by the painter Lachhman Das on reverse of a Nala-Damayanti drawing. National Museum.

of little help unless we can see an actual Purkhu picture. In any case Purkhu who belongs to a different artist-family altogether with a style of its own, must be left out of consideration. It is naturally not possible to be categorical in the absence of firm evidence like a colophon, but a consideration of the set of sanguine drawings in the National Museum, which is truly remarkable in its fluency and power, inclines us to the view that those drawings might well have been the work of Nainsukh himself. This is a bold conclusion to arrive at in the absence of evidence, but there is nothing unlikely in the suggestion. In their mature style, which had come into being by 1770 or so, there is a glimmering of the gift of Nainsukh with which we are familiar from his wonderful studies both of men and groups in his Balwant Singh paintings. There are those delicate touches which are a signature of his genius and which one finds strewn all over this marvellous set. It is not unlikely that these sanguine drawings were produced by Nainsukh as he has growing old, like Ranjha produced his large set of *Rāmāyaṇa* drawings in the evening of his life. Such a possibility is not at all remote; the drawings were meant to remain in this form as *namoonās;* not to be worked on themselves but to serve as master drawings on which later sets were to be based. This might well have been a way of a master leaving his family an heirloom, for these master drawings were what constituted the permanent possession of a family of artists. The finished paintings all went to the patrons for whom they were done; what remained in the family and passed from generation to generation was this accumulated treasure.

Once this set of sanguine drawings was there, the set based on it was made, we believe, not by Nainsukh himself but by one of his disciples among whom Ranjha was certainly one. Elsewhere,[133] in a discussion of the *Rāmāyaṇa* sanguine drawings prepared by Ranjha in his old age, we have noted the fluency that he was able to command. Even in those first, impromptu sketches, the function of which really is to narrate the story, to suggest the composition, mark the placing of figures and interpret the sentiment, we have clear indication of his talent, even if it is of a lower order than that of Nainsukh. But we must make allowance perhaps for advanced age. And it is not unlikely that it was Ranjha who was responsible for the execution of the Nala-Damayantī paintings and primed drawings. The likely date for this we consider to be the decade between 1790 and 1800 on grounds of style. The date suggested for the drawings by Mr Eastman, between 1810 and 1814, appears to us to be a little late, the last quarter of the 18th century would perhaps be more reasonable.

There is no final solving of mysteries. We will not quite know why this set was left unfinished. Nor, for that matter, whether there was only one set or more than one as is indicated by the duplicates of some of the Coomaraswamy drawings in the National Museum. If there were two full sets of primed drawings, one does not know why both of them remained unfinished. Could it be that two different disciples turned out two different sets based on the same series of sanguine drawings left by the master artist? It would be interesting to recall, in possible answer to this, that in this tradition the master would have many pupils not only from

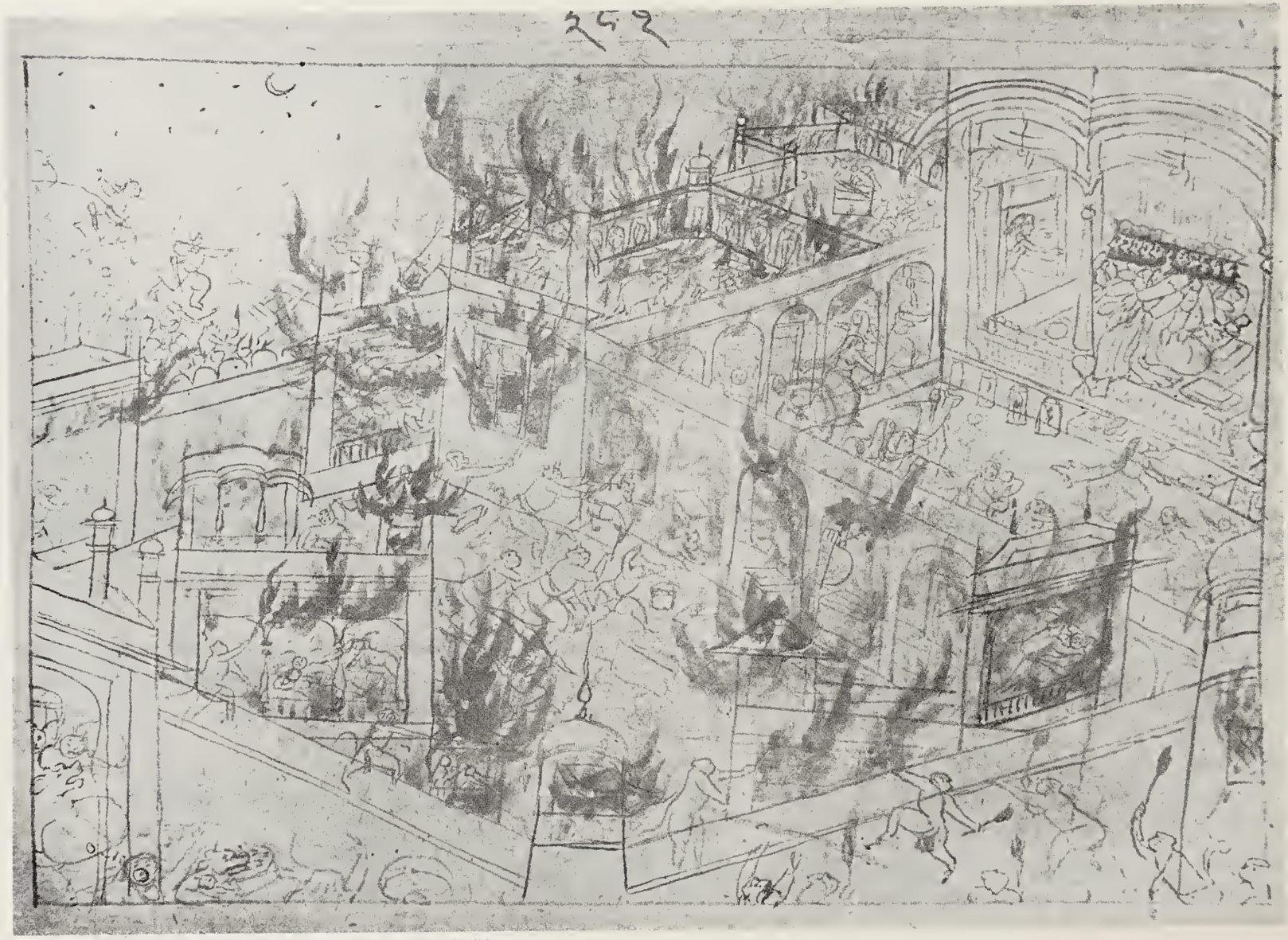


Fig. 73. Illus. to the Rāmāyaṇa by Ranjha. Bharat Kala Bhavan

among his sons but also other relations like nephews. It would not be difficult to see, then, two different artists undertaking the task of producing sets based on the master drawings. A string of names comes to one's mind. There is not only Ranjha, the youngest son of Nainsukh, but his two brothers, Nikka and Gaudhu, who were alive at this time; there also were the two sons of Manak, Fattu and Khushala, who must have been equally active.[134]

To whom precisely to ascribe the set, then, remains a problem. But as a reminder of the fact that this work emerges undoubtedly from the family atelier of Nainsukh there is a brief pencilled note at the back of one of the National Museum drawings in the hand of Lachhman Das of Rajol, great great-grandson of Nainsukh.[135] The set of drawings was with him when it was acquired by the dealer from whom it passed on to the Museum.

NOTES

1. This is one of the most frequently quoted *ślokas* from the *Mahābhārata*. In the text this is followed by another which says: "And this historical account also is the destroyer of (the evil tendencies of) Kali. O you unfallen one, having heard (this) it is easy or possible for one situated like you, O Lord of subjects, to be consoled." See, D.P. Malaviya (trans.) *Nalopākhyāna,* Allahabad, 1958, p. 118.

2. See, Arunodaya Natwarlal Jani, *A Critical Study of Śrīharṣa's Naiṣadhacaritam,* Baroda, 1957, appendix 3, for a full list of the literature on the Nala story. This section of ours relies heavily on Dr Jani's researches. Also, see Chandika Prasad Shukla, *Naiṣadha Pariśīlan,* Allahabad, 1960; and Hargovind Shastri, *Naiṣadha Mahākāvyam,* 2 Parts, Varanasi, 1961, for more information on the subject.

3. This manuscript is in the L.D. Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad and attention to it was drawn by Dr Moti Chandra and Dr U.P. Shah in their "New Documents of Jaina Paintings", *Sri Mahavira Jaina Vidyalaya Suvarnamahotsava Granth*, Bombay, 1968.

4. For a discussion of this, see Karl Khandalavala and Moti Chandra, *New Documents of Indian Painting,* Bombay, 1969.

5. Eight folios of this were in the collection of Sri Muni Punyavijayaji of Ahmedabad. Attention to these is drawn by Dr Pramod Chandra in his "Ustad Salivahana and the Development of Popular Mughal Art", *Lalit Kala,* No. 8, figs. 39, 40.

6. See Pramod Chandra, "Ustad Salivahana and the Development of Popular Mughal Art", *Lalit Kala,* No. 8 figs. 23 and 27 for reproductions of some of these.

7. This illustrated MS. is in the Prince of Wales Museum and bears a colophon which gives its date as A.D. 1698.

8. Nos. IS: 265-1953 and IS: 30-1954 to IS: 39-1954 belong to this series. The pictures appear to be based, however, on a version of the *Mahābhārata* story rather than the *Naiṣadhacarita* of Śrīharṣa. These paintings are not discussed fully here because stylistically they fall outside the scope of the discussion of the Karan Singh paintings and the Coomaraswamy and other related drawings.

9. The general accession numbers of these are: 47. 110/1937; 47. 110/1940; 47. 110/1941; 58.54/328; 62.2057. There is another drawing, No. 47. 110/1942 which appears at first to be a part of the same series but in fact is not, and relates perhaps to the Śiva legend. The average size of these drawings is 28 cm. x 43.5 cm. and in their style they strongly recall another set of drawings in the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benares, of the *Jaimanīya Aśvamedha* and bearing the name of the artist Sajnu. While Sajnu worked at Mandi, as we know, he came really from Kangra as is evident from some entries relating to him in the *bahīs* of the *paṇḍās* of Haridwar.

10. These drawings are referred to here as the "Coomaraswamy drawings" because of their having all been at one time in his collection. One drawing in the same series was not reproduced by A.C. Eastman in his monograph for it was unavailable for publication because of its erotic theme.

11. Two vols., London, 1910-12.

12. *Catalogue of the Indian Collections in the Museum of Fine Arts,* Boston, Part V (Rajput Painting), Cambridge, 1926.

13. This is the fullest work, by far, on the Coomaraswamy drawings and was published by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

14. This series of sanguine drawings bears the Nos. 57.107/1-110 and was acquired by the Museum in 1957. The average size of the drawings is 21.5 cm. x33.7 cm. Some of the drawings have a little touching in black (like 57.107/32). The set was noticed and studied in some detail by Dr W.G. Archer some years ago.

15. These drawings, some of them a little damaged, bear Nos. 47.110/1753-1764, and were originally in the B.N. Treasurywalla collection. The average size is 22.5 cm. x 33.7 cm.

16. Thus, the painting reproduced in colour by Dr W.G. Archer (I.S. 147-1951) in his *Kangra Painting*, London, 1952 appears to bear version of a painting in the Karan Singh Collection (Plate 11) showing Damayanti's plight during her separation from Nala. Plate 3 in W. G. Archer, *Indian Painting in the Punjab Hills,* London, 1952, also has the same feeling as the Nala-Damayanti set.

17. These paintings were noticed by Dr M.S. Randhawa in 1960 at Jammu and an exhibition of these was arranged in 1963 at the All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society, New Delhi. A preliminary study of these was made in B.N. Goswamy, "Pahari Paintings of the Nala-Damayanti Theme: Discussion in a New Light", *Roopalekha,* XXXVIII, Nos. 1-2. The set that was presented by Pahda Kunjlal to Dr Karan Singh consisted of 50 paintings, but on close examination we found that three of them were from a different series and in an inferior hand. These were the opening leaves of a *Rāmāyaṇa* set based on Vālmīki's text. The Nala-Damayanti paintings proper in the Karan Singh Collection are thus only 47 in number.

18. *Indian Drawings,* Vol. 2, p. 23.

19. K.K. Handiqui, "The Naiṣadhacarita and Rajput Painting", *Indian Historical Quarterly,* Vol. 12, 1936, pp. 526-529.

20. K.K Handiqui, *Naiṣadhacarita of Śrīharṣa*, 3rd cd., Poona, 1965. The first edition was published in 1934 and the second in 1956.

21. See A.C. Eastman, "The Naiṣadhacarita as the Source Text of the Nala-Damayanti Drawings", Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. 70, 1950, pp. 238-242.

22. We have no reason to doubt that these fly-leaves were attached from the very beginning and were not later additions.

23. A very large number of commentaries on the Naiṣadhacarita are known and Dr Jani (pp. 32-83) lists as many as 46 and discusses them. Among the best known are those by Cāṇḍū Paṇḍit, late 13th century, and by Mallinātha which is dated by many in the 14th century.

24. We are grateful to Sri Raghunandan Shastri for drawing our attention to this saying about bards and fortune-tellers.

25. We find it unnecessary to examine the critical literature on the *Naiṣadharcarita* in detail since our purpose here is limited. However, it might be mentioned that views are sharply divided on the merits of the work and practically every history of Sanskrit literature takes the work into account.

26. It is difficult to determine when the saying gained currency but it is clear that it is of considerable antiquity.

27. Colebrooke, quoted by Jani, p. 272.

28. Dr S.K. De, quoted by Jani, p. 271.

29. Dr S.K. De, quoted by Jani, p. 271. Cf. Dr Bühler's comment: "To the purely native taste, the *Naiṣdhiya* appears now, and has appeared for many centuries, preferable to all other Mahākāvyas".

30. For a detailed discussion and evaluation of this legend, see Jani, 84-94; Hargovind Shastri, pp. 5-12. The discussion of Śrīharṣa inevitably involved controversies regarding his date and the place where he came from about both of which opinions are sharply divided. We here take the 12th century as the date of Śrīharṣa.

31. This Rājaśekhara is different from the famous Rājaśekhara of the 9th century, and is the author of the *Prabandhakoṣa;* it is this work which contains much of lore about Śrīharṣa on which later works draw.

32. Thus, the first canto ends:

"Śrīhīra, the ornamental diamond of crown of great poets, and Mamalla Devi, had Śrīharṣa as their son, whose passions were subdued; here ends the first canto in the epic *Naiṣadhīyacarita* which is beautiful with the play of the sentiment of eros, land is the result of his meditating on his sacred formula—Cintāmaṇi." *Naiṣadhacarita,* I. 145.

33. Dr Jani, p. 30, after carefully considering the matter, concludes: "Though possibly embodying a genuine tradition, these stanzas do not seem to be synchronous with the poem itself." But many other writers take the verses to be authentic and an integral part of the text of the work.

34. Thus, in the last canto: "Drink thou deep with thine eyes, that are fair as the nightlotus, the moon that doth serve to mirror the loveliness of thy face, O lady with thighs as fair as young plantain shoots. . .See, beloved, how for a moment hidden though it be by the curtain of the summit of the mountain, the moon doth spare the rain of its beams to quench the thirst of the cakora birds. . .Just fancy that these beams in the dust are secret meetings with their lovers; now

laying aside their dark garments as though they were the shadow, they move in raiment that matches the moonlight."

35. This, like the place of origin of Śrīharṣa and even his date, is a matter on which opinion is greatly divided and many scholars do believe that the matter portion of the *kāvya* was composed but is now lost.

36. XVIII. 114-117. Thus Dr Handiqui leaves out verses like XVIII. 99; XX. 83; 92-96. It is interesting to mention here that neither a Sanskrit *ṭikā* like Mallināha's nor a Hindi Commentary like Hargovind Shastri's leaves anything out; everything is taken in stride by them.

37. Hargovind Shastri, *Naiṣadaha Mahākāvyam,* Part 2, p. 1205 (XVIII. 100).

38. *Ibid.* XVII. 109.

39. Much of Canto XVII is taken up by discussion on abstruse philosphical concepts between various characters.

40. Thus, *Naiṣadhacarita,* XVIII. 4-26.

41. *Naiṣadhacarita,* XX. 26 et. seq.

42. *Naiṣadhacarita,* XIII. 6.

43. *Naiṣadhacarita,* XIII. 12.

44. *Naiṣadhacarita,* XIII. 34. One reading of this verse yields the following meaning: "Wise maid, why dost thou not conclude this divine being to be Nala nor choose him as thy consort? Certain it is, he is not the reed 'Nala'. It would be an overwhelming loss to thee, if thou shouldst accept him not. Who else could be thy spouse?" This very verse, by a different combination of words to which Sanskrit lends itself so well, and their different meanings, becomes applicable in turn to all the "five" Nalas. A full explanation of the five senses of this verse would take pages as it does (pp. 807-811) in Hargovind Shastri, *Naiṣadha Mahākāvyam,* Part 2.

45. For discussion of some of these, see Jani, pp. 270-271.

46. A.B. Keith in the *History of Sanskrit Literature,* London, 1928, p. 140 cites this story with obvious relish, beginning it with the words: "We could wish that there was some respectable authority for an anecdote once current regarding Harṣa. . . "

47. Several collections of manuscripts in the hills, like those of Pt. Bhu Dev Shastri of Sujanpur, Pt. Chandersekhara of Nadaun, Pt. Sunder Das Shrotri of Nagrota, are convincing proof of this.

48. These are too well known for us to detail them here. Any detailed work on Pahari painting, like Karl Khandalavala's *Pahari Miniature Painting,* Bombay 1958, draws attention to several sets of these.

49. The set is in the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Banares. The drawing bearing No. 1127 carries notes about the preparation of the set in A.D. 1808 by the artist Sajnu.

50. Some of the leaves of this set were at one time in the possession of Mr O.C. Sood of Maria Brothers, Simla.

51. One drawing of this set in a very refined hand is in the Chandigarh Museum.

52. A painting showing Śakuntalā writing on a lotus leaf in the hermitage is in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay.

53. In the Aundh Museum. Dr Moti Chandra drew attention to this set in an article, "Kangra Valley Art in the Aundh Museum", *Times of India Annual,* 1959.

54. This point is brought out convincingly in Karuna Goswamy, *Vaishnavism in the Punjab Hills and Pahari Painting* (doctoral dissertation in typescript), Panjab University Library, 1968.

55. A.K. Coomaraswamy, *Catalogue,* Part V, pp. 47-48.

56. One leaf of this from the National Museum is reproduced in Khandalavala, *Pahari Miniature Painting, fig.* 11.

57. Leaves of this set are distributed over many collections like in the Chandigarh Museum, the Bharat Kala Bhavan and the National Museum. The pictures are based, at least in some cases, on the

Singhāsana Battīsī stories.

58. Attention to those is drawn in Karuna Goswamy, *The Wall Paintings of Sujanpur Tira,* Delhi, 1971.

59. A nearly complete set of the *rati rahasya* drawings was at one time in the collection of the late Raja Baldev Singh of Guler. The artist Lachhman Das of Ustehar also had a set in his own collection. There are many pictures of erotic themes in public collections also.

60. These paintings, from the 1730 Gīta Govinda set of 'Basohli' style, are not as well known as the rest of the set because the treatment of the sexual act in these is perfectly frank. The later Kangra set of the Gīta Govinda theme also has pictures of this description.

61. *Naiṣadhacarita,* II. 88.

62. *ibid,* X. 4.

63. *Ibid.*, X. 5.

64. *Ibid.*, I. 107.

65. *Indian Drawings*, Vol. 2, p. 23.

66. This description is probably the most widely quoted in the literature on Pahari paintings, for it certainly is relevant. It runs thus:

"Raja Sansar Chand spends the early part of the day in the ceremonies of his religion; and from ten till noon in communication with his officers and courtiers. For several days prior to my departure he passed this period at a small bangala, which he had given up for my accommodation, on the outside of the garden. At noon the Raja retires for two or three hours; after which he ordinarily plays at chess for some time, and the evening is devoted to singing and *naching,* in which the perfomers recite most commonly Brij Bhakha songs relating to Kṛṣṇa. Sansar Chand is fond of drawing and has many artists in his employ: he has a large collection of pictures, but the greater part represent the feats of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, the adventures of Arjuna, and subjects from the *Mahābhārata:* It also includes portraits of many of the neighbouring rajas and their predecessors." Moorcroft, *Travels,* vol. I, pp. 144-145.

67. The representation of the *krauñca,* who occurs by this name in a painting of the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*, in the Karan Singh collection, is very similar to that the 'haṁsa' in these pictures. The swan or haṁsa is for the most part a bird that one sees in India only in zoos.

68. It is interesting to notice, thus, that a duck in Bengal is called a *'haṁsa',* its eggs beings sold as 'haṁsa-dīm'.

69. The 'inner' measurements of the Coomaraswamy drawings are, on an average, 22.3 cm.x33.6cm. The Karan Singh paintings measure, on the average, 22.1 cm.x33.8 cm. without the floral and blue border, and 23.8 cm.x35cm. with it. The height in both cases preceeds width.

70. Eastman, *The Nala-Damayantī Drawings,* Plate 18.

71. *Indian Drawings,* Vol. 2, p. 23.

72. These drawings measure, on the average, 21.5 cm.x33.7 cm.

73. Drawings, thus, on which the *Bārāmāsā* series of the 'Guler-Kangra' style, or some of the *Nāyikā bheda* pictures are based, are in the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benares.

74. This set has been discussed in B.N. Goswamy, "The Artist Ranjha and a Dated Set of Ramayana Drawings", *Chhavi: Bharat Kala Bhavan Golden Jubilee Volume*, Benares, 1972.

75. Thus: "Looking about with curiosity, he saw there a Ketaka flower which, in the guise of the bees settling on its full blown leaves, was bearing a disgrace on all sides; the disgrace which it had earned, owing to its rejection by Śiva." *Naiṣadhacarita,* I. 78.

76. The fact that the artist frequently worked in collaboration with, and under the guidance of, a learned Paṇḍit, is often mentioned. Thus, the late Raja Baldev Singh of Guler, the artist Chandu Lal of Rajol, and the artist Gulabu Ram of Samloti all mentioned this prominently. The practice is understandable in view of the limited formal education of the painters who came from the carpenter or *tarkhān* caste. It was Paṇḍits who recited and interpreted the verses which were then illustrated by the painter.

77. *Naiṣadhacarita,* X. 67, 68.

78. In the preliminary study of the set referred to in n. 17 above, it was suggested that the 'painter' in this painting may have been modelled upon Nainsukh if the work was by Ranjha, who might have thus referred to his father as the 'clever artist' that the text mentions. But this, at best, is only a possibility the correctness of which it is difficult to determine. it is interesting to notice that the artist in the sanguine drawing has a beard while in the finished painting he does not.

79. Compare thus No. 47. 110/1753 with Pl. 5 in Eastman; 47. 110/55 with Pl. 7; 47. 110/1756 with Pl. 6; 47. 110/1759 with Pl. 13. Of a drawing like 47. 110/1758, however, there is no counterpart in the Coomaraswamy set.

80. Shri Chandu Lal is very emphatic on this point saying that the art dealer, P.R. Kapur of New Delhi, bought them in a large lot of drawing from his family. He says he even remembers a large set of Nala-Damayanti as a part of his family collection from his childhood and another one of the '*byāh*' or marriage of Nala and Damayantī.

81. Eastman, pp. 22-23, 24. n.2. Mr Eastman compares not only pictures of the same theme in the Coomaraswamy set but also individual figures to arrive at his conclusion as to which of the drawings are in the hand of the master artist and which by a lesser hand. He excludes Nos. 3,5,6,9, 11-13, 15 and 17-18 from the list of works by the master artist, but these were still, he believes the work of "a highly accomplished assistant collaborating with the master."

82. *Indian Drawings,* Vol. 2, pp. 23-24; *Rajput Painting,* Vol. I, pp. 63-64; *Catalogue,* Part V, pp. 106-114.

83. A first essay along these lines is attempted in B.N. Goswamy, "Pahari Painting: The Family as the Basis of Style", *Marg,* September, 1968.

84. Many of these paintings were originally in the collection of Shri Jagmohandas Mody and are reproduced in M.S. Randhawa, *Kangra Paintings of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* New Delhi, 1960.

85. See, M.S. Randhawa, *Kangra Paintings of the Gīta Govinda,* New Delhi, 1963.

86. See. M.S. Randhawa, *Kangra Paintings of the Bihārī Satsaī,* New Delhi, 1966.

87. Many of these are included in M.S. Randhawa, *Kangra Paintings on Love*, New Delhi, 1962.

88. This set is in the National Gallery of Modern Art and forms the subject of M.S. Randhawa's monograph: *Kangra Rāgamālā Paintings.*

89. Indian Drawings, Vol. 2, pp. 23-24.

90. See, thus, figs. 103, 106, 109 in Khandalavala, *Pahari Miniature Painting.* Many other Goverdhan Chand court scenes are in the Chandigarh Museum.

91. These paintings are indeed well known. See, thus, figs. 87-89, 92-98, in Khandalavala, *Pahari Miniature Painting.* This prince was formerly identified as being from Jammu but we are of the considered view that Balwant Singh was a Jasrota prince who came away from there and lived in exile in the Guler territory.

92. See, the portrait of Pandit Harsaran in a Balwant Singh picture, No. 851, in the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benares.

93. *Pahari Miniature Painting,* pp. 250-253.

94. This is another of the well known accounts of Sansar Chand and runs: "For many years he passed his days in great felicity. He was generous in conduct, kind to his subjects, just as Nushirvan, and a second Akbar in the recognition of men's good qualities. Crowds of people of skill and talent, professional soldiers and others, resorted to Kangra and gained happiness from his gifts and favours. . . Performers and story-tellers collected in such numbers, and received such gifts and favours at his hands, that he was regarded as the Hatim of that age, and, in generosity, the Rustam of the Time."

Quoted in J. Hutchison and J. Ph. Vogel, *History of the Punjab Hill States,* 2 vols, Lahore, 1933, vol. 1, p. 181.

95. Moorcroft developed very friendly relations with the raja and his whole family, and has left a warm account of his stay at Sujanpur-Alampur.

96. Moorcroft in fact does not refer to any Nala-Damayantī paintings seen by him in the Raja's collection and Mr Eastman seems to have stretched the point considerably. All that Moorcroft refers to are some pictures of the *Mahābhārata*, among others. The *Mahābhārata* is a very extensive work and cannot be equated with the Nala-Damayantī story which occupies a very small part in it. To conclude then that the *Mahābhārata* pictures seen by Moorcroft were in fact of the Nala-Damayantī theme appears to us unjustified.

97. *Catalogue,* Pt. V, p.106.

98. For a detailed account of O'Brien, see C. Grey, *European Adventurers in Northern India:* 1785-1849. Patiala, 1970 (Reprint), pp. 59-69.

99. *See, Hutchison and Vogel for evidence on this.*

100. *Tawarikh-i-Rajgan-i-Mulk-i-Punjab,* Vol. I, Jammu, 1912, pp. 91-97.

101. See Hutchison and Vogel, Vol. I, pp. 134-135.

102. This Persian account was written in the 19th century by Ganesh Das Badhera for Maharaja Gulab Singh. A MS. of the work is preserved in the British Museum, MS. OR. 1634.

103. See "The Rhapsodies of Gambhir Rai", ed. by John Beames, *JASB*, Vol. XLIV, Pt. I, No. III, 1875.

104. Kahan Singh Balauria, pp. 63-65, gives a fairly detailed character sketch of Raja Amrit Pāl. The period of Amrit Pāl's rule is A.D. 1757-1776.

105. The poet says in this: "He (Pritam Singh) is verily endowed with money and means and with sons and daughters; he is indeed a follower of righteousness, is blessed by Lakshmi, and is endowed with knowledge and valour." See, B.N. Goswamy, "An Illustrated MS. of the Sundara Sringara from Kulu"., *Roopalekha,* NO. XL., Nos. 1-2.

106. Kahan Singh Balauria, pp. 61-62.

107. This is fairly clear from the folk songs of Kangra which tell of Nokhu's sad plight despite her royal status in the palace of Sansar Chand.

108. See, M.S. Randhawa, "Maharaja Sansar Chand", *Roopalekha,* Vol. XXXII, No. 2, figs. 2,4, 11, 14, 15.

109. London, 1960, pl. 94.

110. The portraits are of significance in relationship to the paintings that are here discussed. The portraits of Amrit Pāl, Vijay Pāl and Mahendra Pāl are of special interest.

111. This painting is in the Chandigarh Museum and bears No. 352.

112. Rep. in *Roopalekha,* p. 14, fig. 25.

113. See, Grey, *European Adventurers in Northern India,* pp. 69-70.

114. This is a report by Lt. Leech and mentions at Mandi "guns under the command of a Mr. Reid". *Foreign, Pol. Cons.* No. 50/52, dated 28th Nov., 1938.

115. This is mentioned in the records of a fairly early part of he reign. Thus, for example, a newsletter from the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh at Lahore, dated 6th January, 1811, has the following entry: ". . .Munshi Devi Das was ordered to hand over to Ganga Singh commandant one hundred scarlet-coloured uniform coats, a hundred caps, a hundred flint-lock guns, and to tell him to distribute the same among the newly employed soldiers whose drill would be inspected in the near future." *Events at the Court of Ranjit Singh,* ed. by H.L.O. Garret and G.L. Chopra (Languages Deptt., Punjab, 1970), p. 21.

116. *Catalogue*, Pt. V, p. 106.

117. "The drawings follow the text in almost every instance beginning with the *svayaṁvara,* No. X, except for the one scene in full colour." Eastman, p.5, n. 10.

118. *Catalogue,* p. 107, n. 1.

119. Eastman, p. 107, n. 1.

120. Vigne in his *Travels,* Vol. 1, pp. 81-82, mentioned frescoes in the Mandi Palace in which "Kali, or Parbutti sat (having nothing better to do in Heaven) smoking a hookah, by way of whiling away eternity, . . ." but this, if true, would be extremely unusual. We are inclined to the view that Vigne made a mistake in identifying the figure.

121. One of these is in the Karan Singh collection; another was reproduced by Dr M.S. Randhawa in *Roopalekha,* Vol. XXXVII, p. 29. Dr Randhawa has published it as a portrait of Amrit Pāl, but it is much more likely that it is of Mahendra Pāl. In the collection of Shri Jagdish Mittal there is another painting in the same style and format as the Nala Damayantī paintings, which possibly shows Raja Mahendra Pāl with his queen in one part of the palace. In the other part of the palace, the Raja sits in a double storeyed pavilion.

122. Pahda Kunjlal also had many other paintings some of which are now in the Dogra Art Gallery, Jammu.

123. Dr Randhawa saw with the Pahda family a really large collection but this was gradually gifted away or sold.

124. This letter is reproduced in B.N. Goswamy, "A Painter's Letter to His Royal Patron: An Old Takri Document", *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* Vol. 86, No. 2.

125. For a general introduction to the records of the *paṇḍās,* see B.N. Goswamy, "The Records Kept by Priests at Centres of Pilgrimage as A Source of Social and Economic History", *Indian Economic and Social History Review,* Vol. III, No. 2. The genealogical table of Seu-Nainsukh family is fully reconstructed in *Marg,* Sept. 1968.

126. These are among some of the best known Pahari paintings. See, Khandalavala, *Pahari Miniature Paintings,* for some reproductions. Two of the paintings, Nos. 91 and 94, bear Nainsukh's name.

127. See, B.N. Goswamy, "Pahari Painting: The Family as the Basis of Style", *Marg,* Sept., 1968, p. 20, fig. 9.

128. This entry occurs in the *bahī* of Pandit Hari Bilas of Kurukshetra and has been rep. in *Marg,* Sept. 1968, earlier.

129. This was a common practice in the hills. The portraits of Hindal Pāl and Dhiraj Pāl of Basohli are thus in a later style and cannot have been contemporary. They were obviously based upon earlier portraits in the 'Basohli' style.

130. This set bears numbers from No. 2000 onwards. The colophon occurs at the back of No. 2702. The set originally consisted of 707 drawings.

131. Devidatta, grandson of Ranjha, was also settled at Basohli before he moved to Lahore and then to Patiala.

132. Eastman, p. 24.

133. B.N. Goswamy, "Pahari Paintings of the Nala Damayantī Theme: Discussion in a New Light", *Roopalekha,* Vol. XXXVIII, Nos. 1 and 2.

134. See, *Marg,* Sept. 1968, for the dates and more information on these artists.

135. The artist Lachhman Das, father of Shri Chandu Lal who is living, was given to making incidental notes of all kinds, in pencil, at the back of drawings in his ancestral collection. This note merely records, at the back of No. 57. 107/58, the death of a Ghirth, Chamaru, on Monday, the 31st of Baisakh, V.S. 1992, but its presence clearly links the drawings with Lachman Das's family collection.

PLATES

NOTES ON COLOUR PLATES

1 The Glory of the Court of Nala

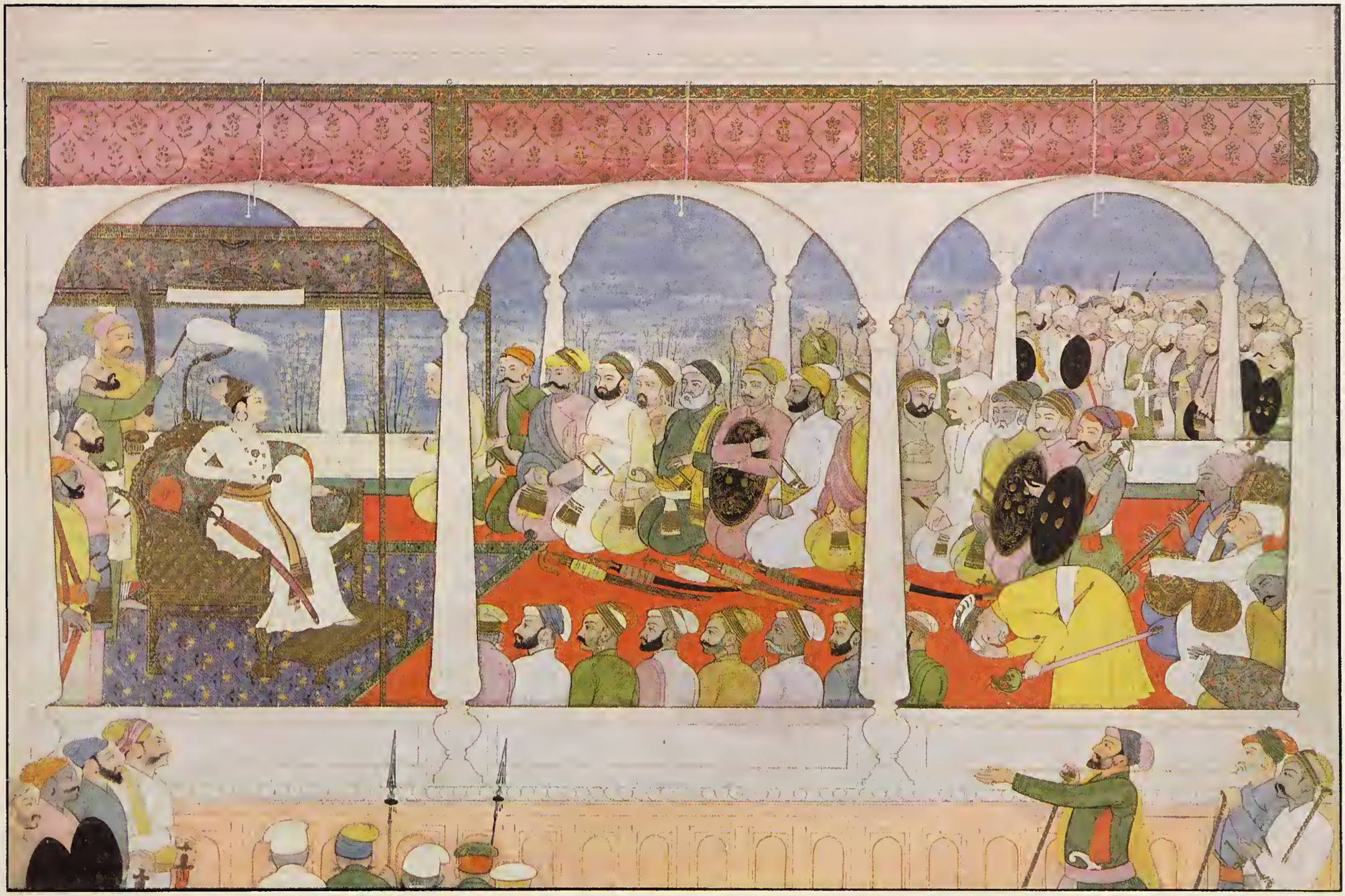
"Nala was a mass of radiance, resplendent from festivities, the circle of his fame serving as a white umbrella for him. Drinking in his story, protector as he was of the earth, the gods do not in a like manner esteem even nectar." I.I

"The able king, with a splendour like that of the sun, rose in prosperity day by day, joyfully passing his time with poets and scholars, who ceaselessly practised their art; (just as the powerful sun rises each day in joy, creating the hours with the planets Venus and Mercury constantly staying by its side)." 1.17

The painter endeavours here to capture the glory of the court of Nala. It is interesting to see, however, that he leans upon his own experience of a small, intimate Pahari Court rather than conjure up magnificence on a scale that he was not familiar with. Even so, there is decided splendour that he is able to suggest alike in the multitude of standing men at the back, in the rows of courtiers and attendants and in the soldiers and heralds that appear in the foreground. There is a preoccupation on his part here with depicting definite types: one has only to see the row of fourteen persons facing Nala to be convinced of this. Here he has brought in all together, men of wisdom, of valour, and of learning. These human types are undoubtedly based on close observation and one is reminded of similar characters in a great many paintings in the hands of members of the artist family of Paṇḍit Seu and his two sons, Manak and Nainsukh. It is here, one imagines, that those wonderfully sensitive and intimate portrait sketches that invariably formed a part of family collections of artists were put to use. The group of musicians is especially to be noticed for it so vividly recalls to one's mind the performers that one finds so often in paintings of Balwant Singh of Jasrota.

This painting is of special interest from the point of view of comparison with the frontispiece in Eastman's *Nala Damayantī Drawings (Nala in Council with poets and scholars)* which has been believed to represent this very scene. The contrast between the formal grandeur of this composition and the intimate nature of 'this' scene in the Boston drawing is obvious; as has been suggested in the text, that drawing does not represent this scene, and does not belong perhaps even to that series.

The colours of this painting, subtle and powdery as they are, are a trifle faded and this no doubt is due to the fact that this, as the first painting of the series, must have lain on top for long in a *bastā* and perhaps handled the most.

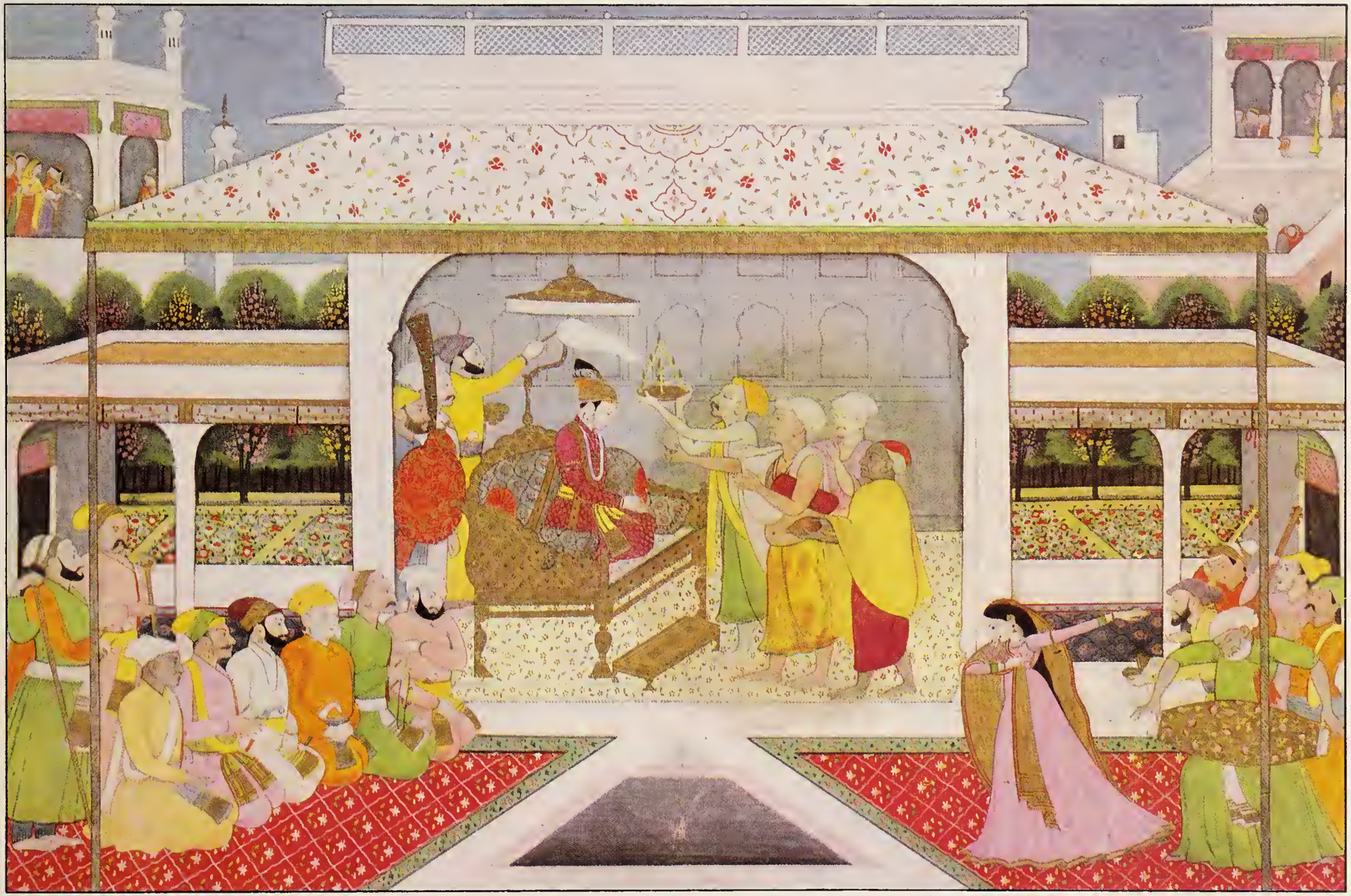


2 The Arati of Nala

"He, the slayer of kings, shone with the 'ceremony of circular waving of lights' performed (in his honour), after having gone round, with a view to conquest, the circle of the earth, refulgent with his might, that was radiant as the fires which burnt up completely the cities of his enemies." I. 10

This is a warmer scene than the preceding one. The celebration of the triumphal return of Nala must have been a state occasion, but the painter elects here to impart same intimacy to this part of the celebrations. The group of courtiers at the left is small and there is suggestion of their forming an inner coterie. The dancer at the right, with the marvellous group of musicians behind her, one could see as a favourite; and the setting is not that of a hall of audience but of private apartments in pleasurable surroundings. The group of priests is splendidly rendered and the painter varies them as much as he can: their ages, the colours of their garments, even the garments themselves, the headgears, all set each one of them apart from the others. This is the kind of subtlety of variation that one is apt to miss at first and that invests paintings from the Pahari area with such charm. The slightly bowed head of Nala is entirely true to his character as conceived by Śrīharṣa. He has returned after conquering all quarters of the earth and yet there is no arrogance in him. He receives humbly the honour that is being accorded him.

In formal terms the painter succeeds in breaking the stiffness that comes with excessive symmetry in architecture and he varies forms with great skill. The monotony of the round-topped trees all in a row, the rectangular flower beds in the background, the low open pavilion extending to either side of the loggia is offset by the animation of activity. To the formal line of courtiers at the left he opposes the vibrant, *mouvemente* group of dancers and musicians at right; the vertical lines of the loggia are varied by him in the wonderfully bold, rhomboid pattern of the water cistern with the fountain in the foreground. The structures in the distance at the right and left are again varied, as are the groups of women in them that point eagerly towards Nala or entertain for him secret longings in their hearts. An interesting feature is the strong semi-circular shadow of the light given out by the *ārati* lamps that falls on the grey wall behind. This unusual concern with falling shadows appears in many other paintings of this set.



3 Panegyrists singing praises of Nala

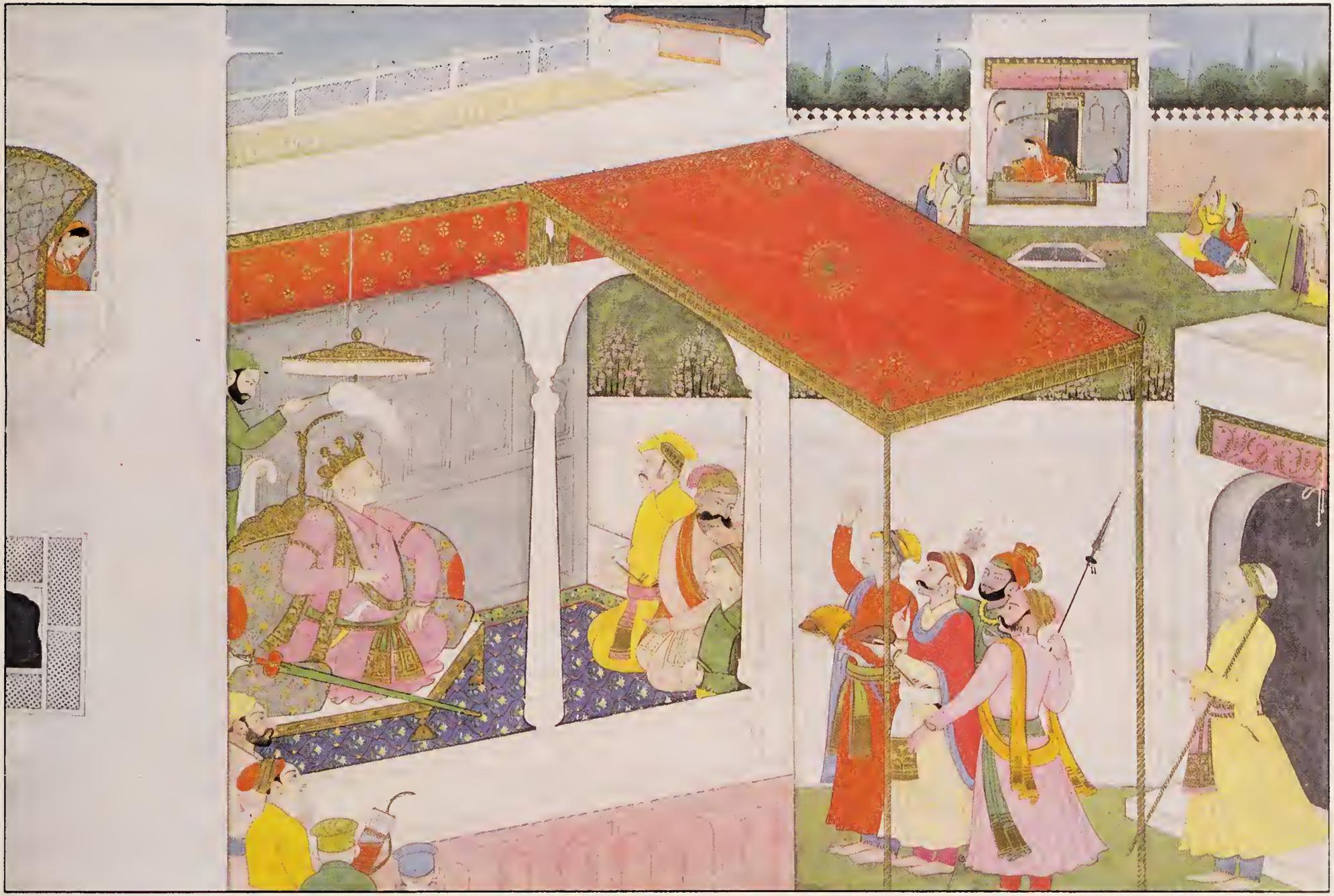
"The daughter of King Bhīma devoted her mind, utterly subservient to the command of Cupid, particularly to Nala, worthy of her wealth of beauty, of whom she had repeatedly heard". I.33

"Every day coming to pay homage to her father, she took delight in the recitals of panegyrists, and was profusely thrilled, hearing of Nala, while they sang the praises of kings." I. 34

This undoubtedly is the kind of scene that the Pahari painter must have been familiar with well in life, for panegyrists formed a part of every royal household. It was common for *bhāṭs* from one court to visit another, sometimes carrying messages, at others simply paying friendly visits. Here as the *bhāṭs* sing with arms raised and, one imagines, in loud resonant voices, the praises of Nala, it is not only king Bhīma who hears them so intently: one noble turns his head better to hear and a courtier standing at bottom left raises his hand to his chin in the familiar gesture expressing wonder. The most avid listener, of course, is Damayantī who appears in a little corner above as she modestly but with deep interest raises slightly the cloth screen hanging alongside her balcony window. One of the *bhāṭs*, it might be noticed, carries a shoot of *dub* grass in his right hand and a coconut in his left. These are humble offerings which will be accepted by Bhīma and he undoubtedly rewarded with a royal gift.

There is another little cameo which the painter brings in at the back. Here Damayantī is seen again, listening to music at the same time as she is carrying on a conversation with her friends. The painter frequently brings in subsidiary scenes like this in this entire set, for off and on there is much that he had to illustrate considering the length of Śrīharṣa's descriptions. Here Damayantī carries on perhaps that conversation in which the mere mention of Nala excites the greatest possible interest in her even though her friends refer only to a reed of that name.

The delicate little deer that bends to drink from the water cistern may only be the rendering of a familiar sight in the inner apartments of Pahari palaces; and yet it might be a reference to the heart of Damayantī ensnared in the thoughts of Nala as this deer that was caught and then domesticated.

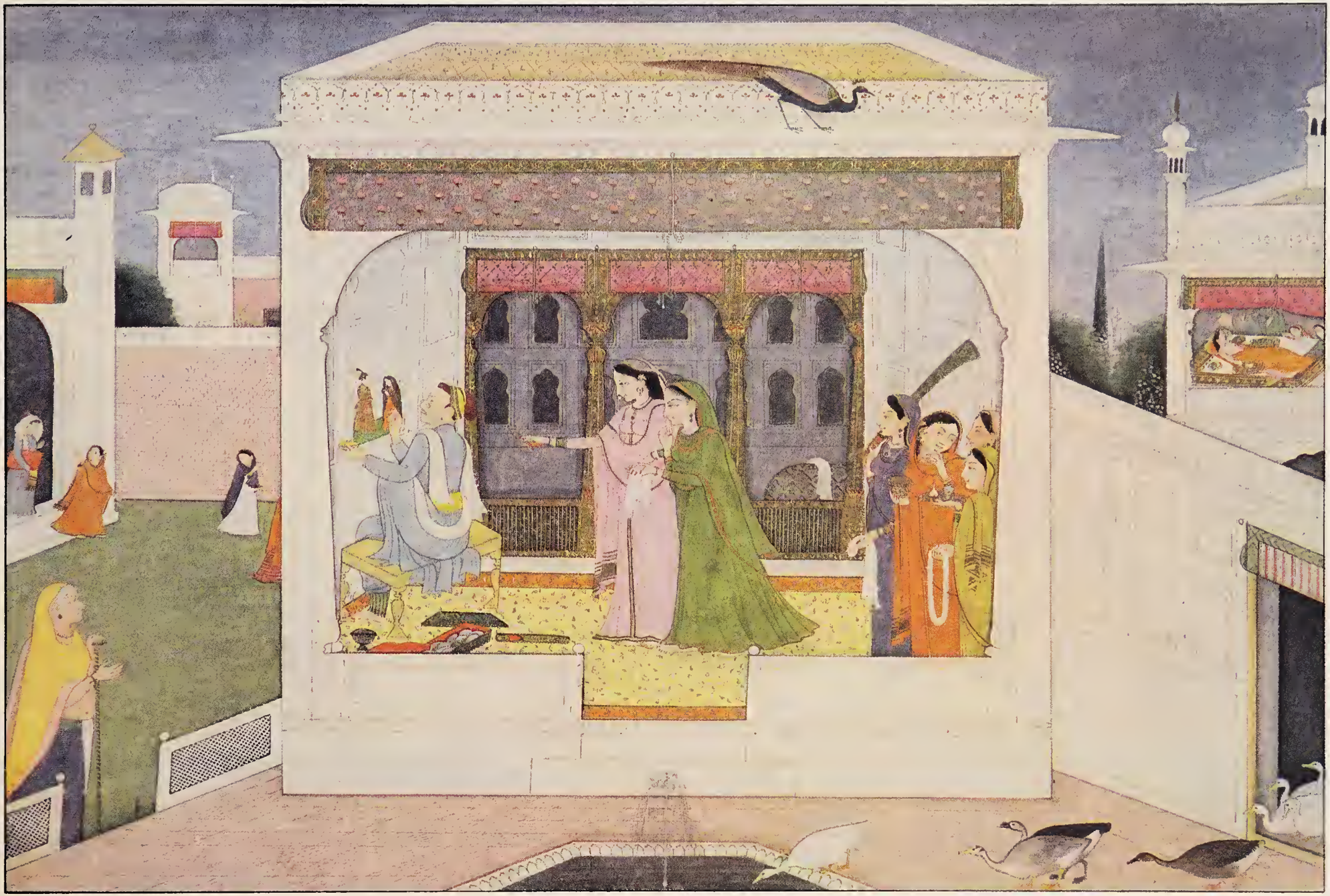


4 Damayanti and the Painter

"Draw on the wall of the recreation hall a lover and his beloved excelling the three worlds in beauty. Thus saying, she used to see the love of Nala and herself, which she caused to be depicted by some clever artist."I.38

The interest of this painting, one of the loveliest in the set, resides principally in the painter and what he is doing even though it is Damayantī with her friend who occupies, naturally, the centre of the stage. We see the painter twice, once as he enters at the left, a quiet little figure with a *bastā* under his arm and then again seated on a *chaukī,* painting. One cannot visualize a subject with which the Pahari painter could have been more familiar; he, therefore, naturally captures the artists' likeness with complete fidelity. The manner of his sitting, the pose that he strikes, holding a bowl containing paint in his left hand and the brush in the right, the pince-nez that he wears, the container with colours and shells and brushes lying on the ground all ring completely authentic. It is not often that one sees so detailed a rendering of a painter at work in Pahari paintings; another painting that comes to the mind where a lady addresses the painter is in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Of simple portrait; sketches of painter we have of course quite a number.

Damayantī, as seen here, is a creature of extreme loveliness and the painter invests her with that refinement which belongs to Śrīharṣa's elaborate descriptions of her. The youthful figures of her and her friends are contrasted with the vivid portrait of the old duenna at bottom left. The old lady again belongs to a type that one encounters in many paintings in the hand of other members of this artist family. A detail of great charm is the group of ducks in the foreground at right as they come in from outside and make for the little pond. They are drawn with great skill and whether it is the white ducks at the back or the *nakta* in the middle, they apparently have been observed with great accuracy. The delicacy of detail is equally noticeable in the peacock perching on the roof and the floral designs on the top frieze of the loggia or the cloth screens one sees rolled up. The vignette of a lady asleep in the distance refers possibly to Damayantī again, dreaming her dreams of Nala.



5 Nala going out of his palace

"Just as the solar rays follow the sun, similarly bright-looking horsemen followed the king, who rode that swift horse, and whose lotus hand was distinctly marked by figures of lotus blossoms." l. 65

" Two cavalry battalions in the vanguard of Nala'a army, brandishing the tips of their lances at one another, fought a mock fight out of fun, crying 'Take, Strike' ." l. 68

Here, as Nala sets out to seek diversion, mounted on his horse "brilliant with the lustre of his mane", we see him lost in his own thoughts even as there is so much of activity around him. There is an air of distant detachment in his figure which stands out in the tumult of activity. The procession marches exactly in the manner in which we see that of many a Pahari ruler in paintings; there are the attendants in front carrying their own weapons, and those of their master, carefully wrapped in brocaded cloth; there are the footmen, one of them carrying the royal standard, another a peacock tail fan; and there are the companions and nobles riding behind. The one detail that makes this painting different from the usual renderings of processions like this is the army of horsemen in the middle distance, their spirited mounts all rendered with great verve. This, however, is strictly to meet the demands of the text. Above the heads of the contingent at middle left the fineness with which the cloud of dust raised by the horses has been painted, is worthy of notice.

An interesting feature is the appearance of the pleasure-garden in the far distance at right. It is here that the next episode of the story will unfold. The painter could quite easily have done without it in this painting, but, consistently, he shows a tendency in this set to bring in a feature that leads the viewer, as it were, to the next act. The landscape as it appears here is entirely familiar. These same low, rolling hills without much vegetation occur in numerous other paintings. The painter is not called upon by the text to show them; it is simply that once again he was painting what he saw around himself.



6 Nala captures the Swan

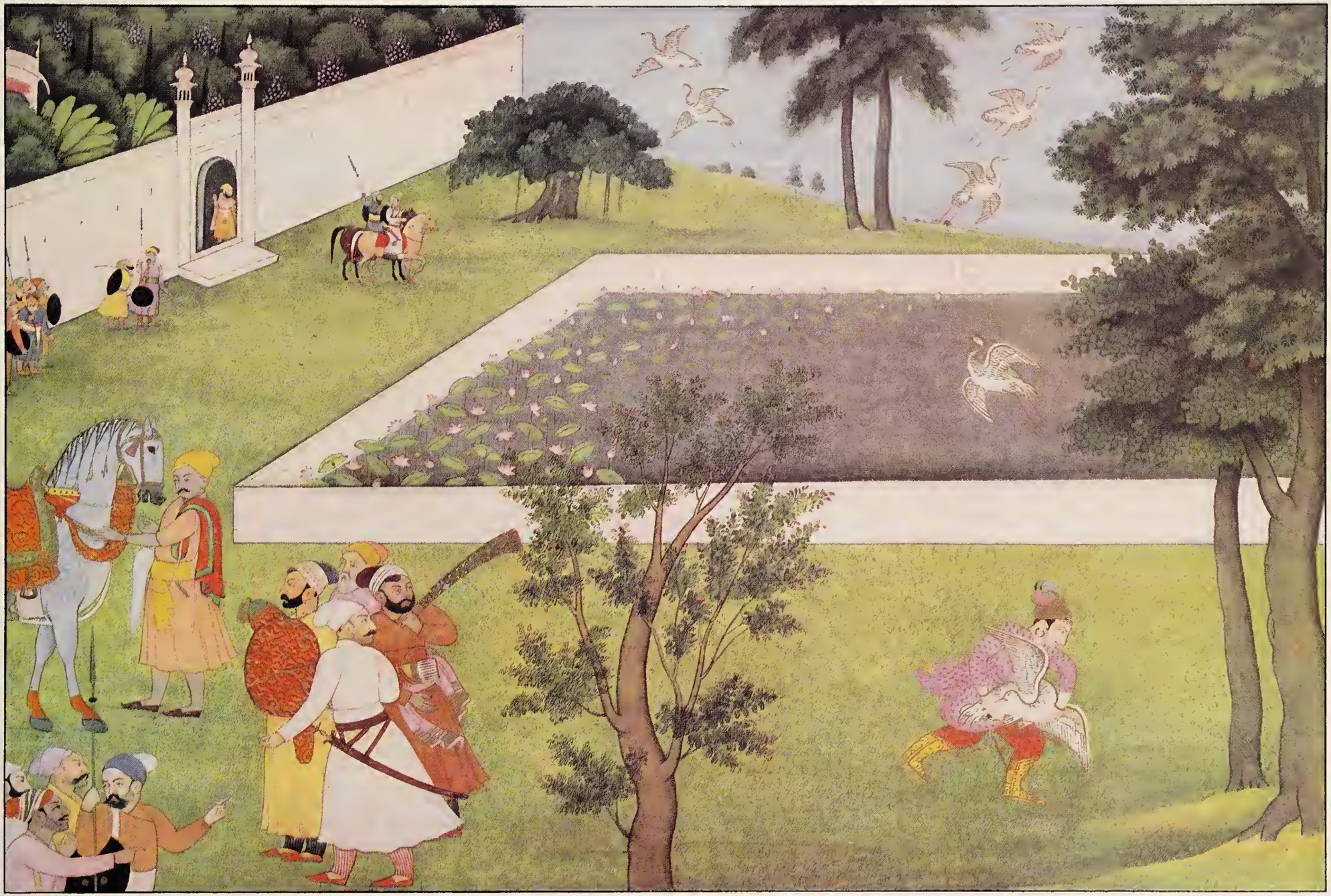
"The king guilefully made his frame smaller, which (then) resembled Viṣṇu (during his Dwarf Incarnation), and took hold of the bird with his hands, having come to its side with silent feet." I. 124

"The bird, perceiving that it was caught by him, tried in fright to fly away again and again. Quacking and despairing of flying away, it simply bit the hands of its captor." I. 125

One has to notice here the skill with which the painter renders the 'shortened' figure of Nala as he captures the swan. The suggestion of the text clearly is that Nala did not in fact become small at that moment; he simply managed to dispose his body thus. The painter draws, therefore, with great imagination the figure of Nala at an angle at which he can achieve this effect. The faithfulness to the text is again seen in so small a detail as the pecking of Nala's hand by the swan. Once again we see evidence of sharp observation on the part of the painter in the way in which he paints the fluttering outspread wings of the swan while held by Nala. Quite deliberately the figure of the king with the swan is separated from the group of attendants at left. This not only suggests the king leaving his retainers behind before going and capturing the swan; it also creates an uncluttered space in which is painted the principal action of this sequence. Nala has apparently been noticed, as is evident by the turned heads and outstretched hands of some of the servants, but there is no interference with what he does.

It is to be remarked that the birds depicted here are not swans; they look more like egrets. But then, as has been said in the text, the swan is a bird rarely seen in India and the egret is known to everyone including naturally the Pahari painter.

The 'swans' are seen flying here in different directions, as they would in panic, and the painter avoids showing them flying in a regular diagonal formation as one sees so often in other paintings. He, thus, does not avail himself of a standard formula of painting a flight of swans; he paints on the other hand with deliberateness and understanding of the occasion.



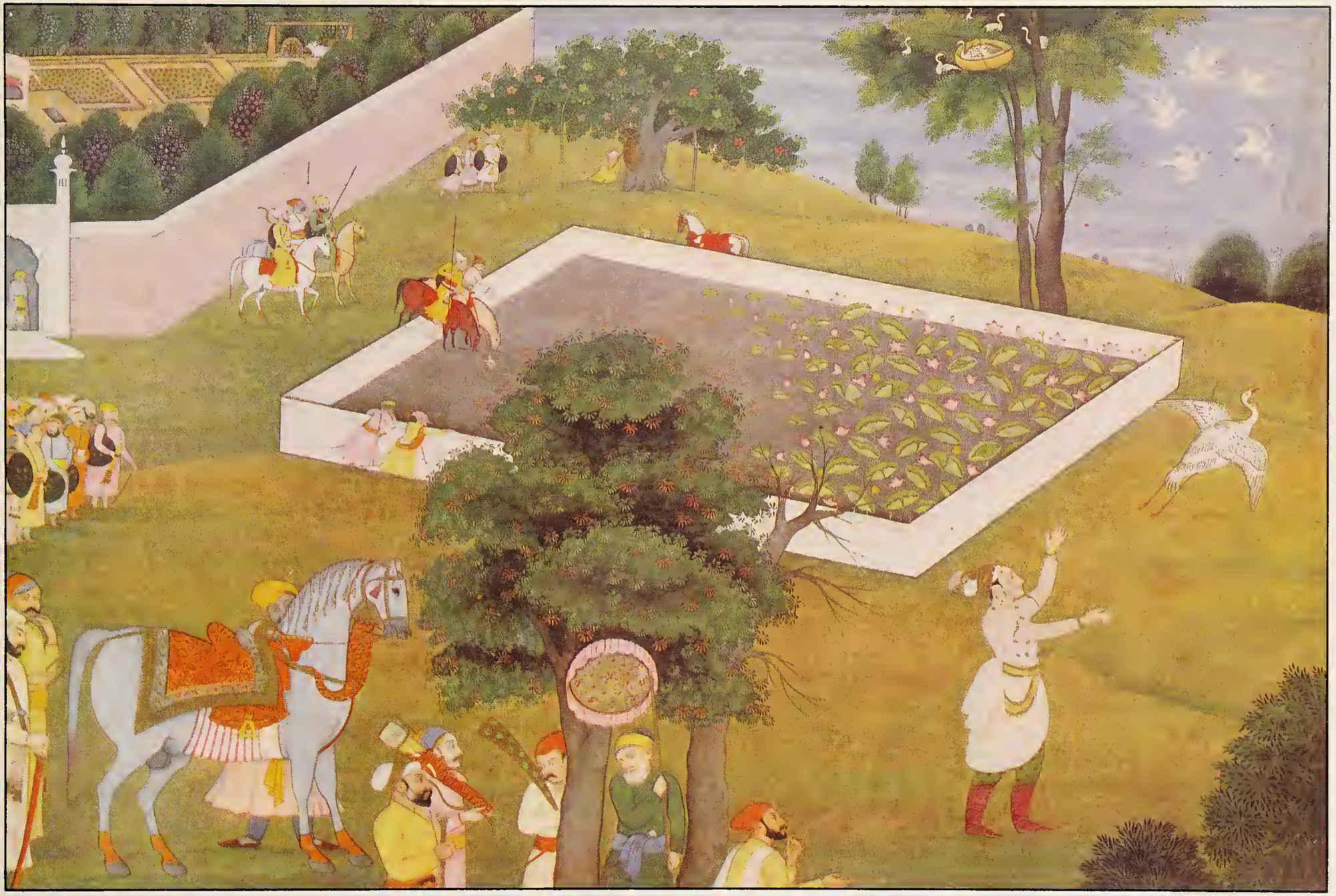
7 Nala releases the Swan

" 'I have seen thy beauty for which I caught thee; now go as thou likest' ; with these words, the king owing to his kindness for the poor, set the bird free which was thus lamenting." l. 143

"While its friends were honouring it as if with a waving of lights in the guise of their circular flying round it, the bird made tears of joy follow in the wake of their streams of tears, previously shed in grief." l. 144

Nala is back to his normal height here and we notice the careful detail of his having tucked his *jāmā* in his waistband for ease of movement. One would normally see a tucked garment like this shown only on persons of lower rank as they move about. The release of the swan does clearly puzzle some of the retainers who raise wondering hands to their chins. The circular formation of the swans in the sky is completely faithful to the text which speaks of the friends of the captured swan, "honouring it, as if with a waving of lights in the guise of their circular flying round it." It is to be noticed that the placing and the forms of the trees, the shape of the tank, the side of it in which lotuses appear in bloom, even the colour of the *jāmā* of Nala have all changed here from the preceding painting. None of this is suggested by the text specifically, but the painter in a general way avails himself of the kind of licence that Śrīharṣa uses in his poetic descriptions which observe no unities of time, space and the like. The painter here varies the setting entirely as it pleases him; in doing so he does at least succeed in avoiding monotony of composition.

The scene around the tank here is very lively. Two men lean against one of its walls and point to something that they see in the water, perhaps the beauty of the lotuses in it. The two soldiers water their horses at the left and another walks on the far side of the tank. It is interesting to see that the tank follows the normal shape of tanks in the hills: the bottom is sloped towards one side so that the depth of water inside it is carefully graded. It is because of this that the horses are being watered at the shallow end and the lotuses bloom in the part where water is the deepest.



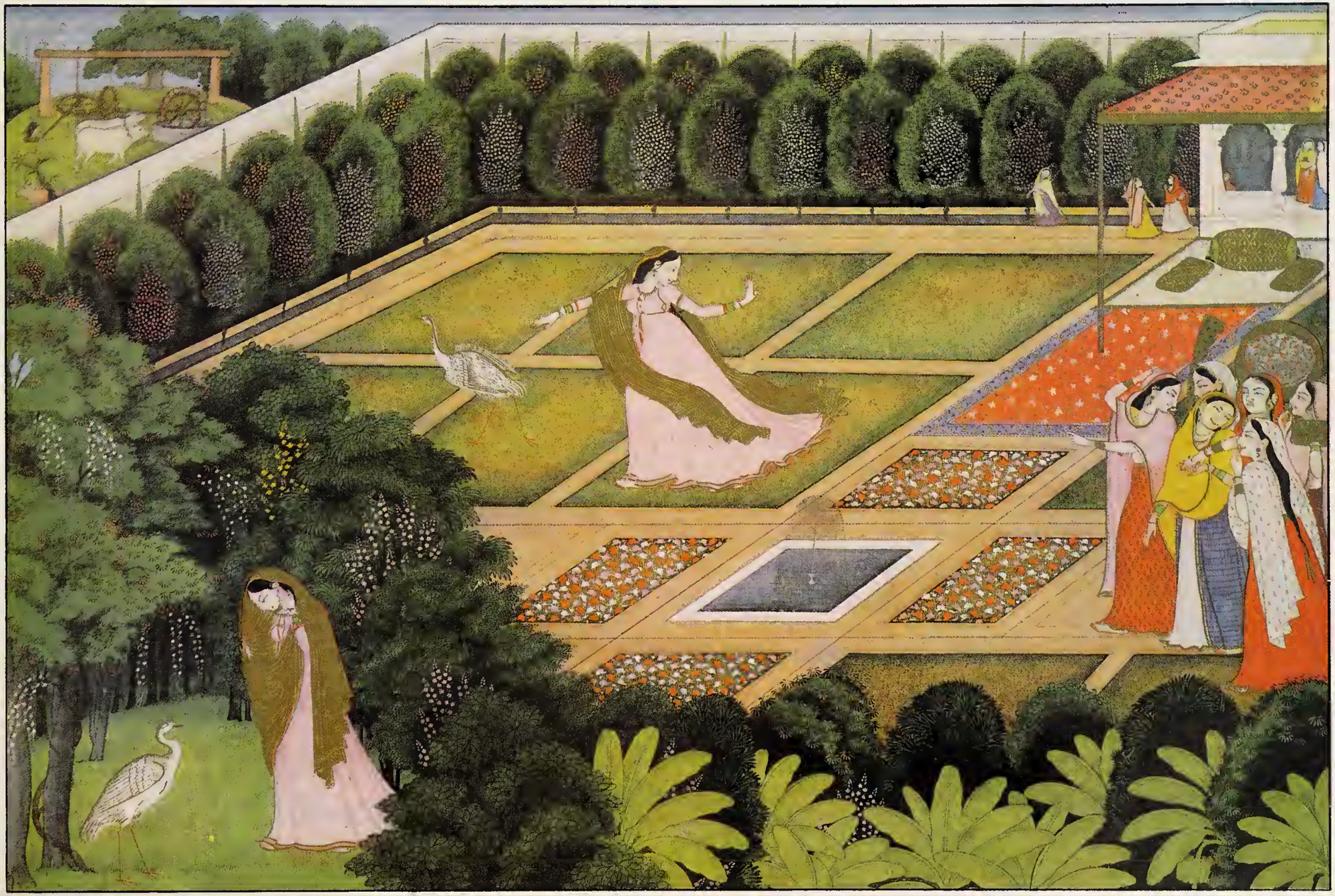
8 The Swan in Damayanti's garden

"Then the golden-winged bird saw there the princes, radiant in a concourse of her friends as bright as herself, and whose beauty was able to rival that of the crescent of the moon abiding amidst the assembly of stars." II. 107

"The bird, sportively going along, lured the slender-limbed damsel into the midst of creepers, while the fair one was thinking at each succeeding step that it was about to come within reach of her hands." III. 11

Despite there being several parts in this painting each of which demands attention, the focus remains fixed on the centre where we see the wonderfully fluid figure of Damayantī. The painter renders both her form and state of mind with an almost intuitive understanding. Because of her swift movement her clothes tend to spread and fly backwards; one of her feet is stepping forward and we see faintly the outline of the other leg as it is slowly about to be lifted. We even see the outline of her rounded back under the opaque material of her lavender *peshwāz*. One of her arms is stretched out to catch the swan and the other raised in a restraining gesture to her friends whom she turns back to admonish for making too much noise. Her figure is a study in movement and in balance. With all her agitation, however, there is no suggestion at all of lack of grace or dignity. The swan is remarkably alive both as it deceptively slows down to tempt Damayantī to follow him and as it speaks to her in a human voice in the 'forest' at left. The intent, bending figure of Damayantī as she shyly listens to the swan in the forest is in total contrast to the vivaciousness of her form in the centre of the painting.

There is much in this painting that is hard and geometric, but before the mannered rows of flowering bushes against round-topped trees alternating with thin cypresses, or the rectilinear beds, become too oppressive, the painter introduces elements of variety in the sylvan grove at bottom left or the loggia with its outstretched awning at right. The animated group of Damayantī's friends, their emotions alternating between curiosity and amusement, is full of interest as is the delicately rendered scene of a Persian-wheel which makes its unexpected appearance outside the garden walls at the top left.



9 The Swan returns to Nala

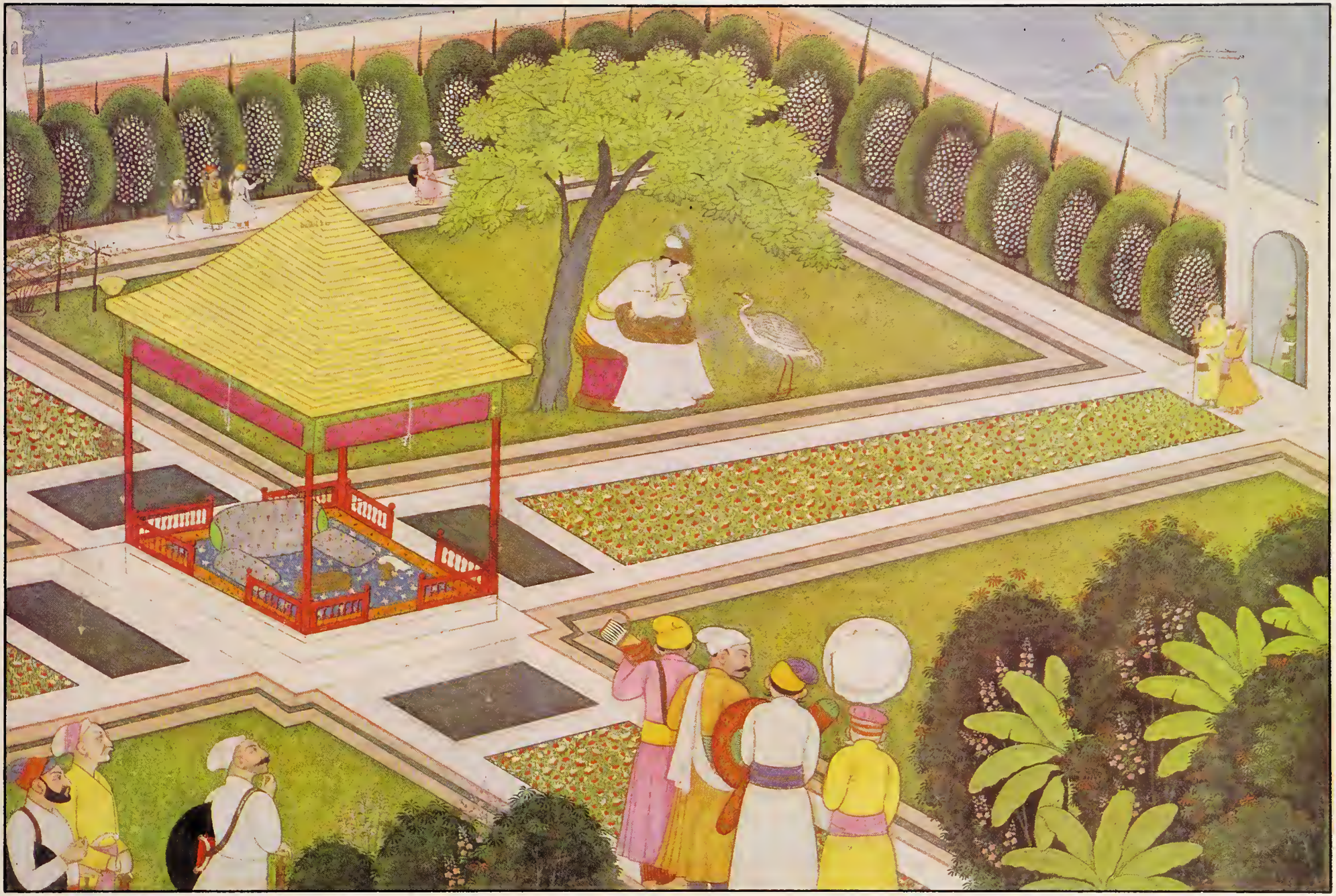
"The bird found the king restless with love and making a bed of young shoots and leaves fade away (with the heat of his body), while he was under an Aśoka tree, crowned with a luxuriant growth of flowers that vied with the flaming arrows of Cupid, the tree being on the bank of the pool of water near which it had erstwhile seen him." III.133

" 'Dependent Damayantī, to thee I will say nothing; but swan come quickly, tell me what she said about me'—Nala having said thus, the swan, coming near, related it. In the case of the good the only delay in the attainment of a cherished object is that of their own desire." III.134

It took the painter some time obviously to decide on the relative setting and form of several elements in this composition; in one of the master-sketches the open air pavilion is differently shaped, the tree under which Nala sits brooding is placed differently. As we see this composition now, it still strikes us as lacking in that liveliness that we see elsewhere. Somehow, the painter must have been aware of this as he contemplated changes at the preparatory stages. The figure of Nala combines a degree of quiet sadness which was his as he waited for the return of the swan, with the intense attention that he now pays him, hearing his account. Once again Nala is separated from the other figures in the painting, for this ensures him privacy of thought; but there is concern for him everywhere. The retainers in the foreground, the two figures close to the gate at right, the group of three including a *mālī* at far back, are all 'involved'.

The small pavilion with its curiously shaped roof appears picturesque at the same time that it is used to break the rigid layout of the *cahār-bāgh* garden. That this is undoubtedly a pleasure-spot is evident from the carpet and the comfortable cushions placed in it and the little pools of water with fountains that appears on all four sides of it at the head of long stretches of flowers in rectangular beds. The tree under which Nala is seated is no more an *Aśoka* tree than the egret is a swan, but, again, this comes from the painter's not being familiar with one in the hills. A small corner of the quadrangle in which Nala sits is occupied by a climber which has been trained to spread over the frame supported by tall legs.

The entire scene is viewed from above, almost as if it were being seen from the vantage point of the swan. It is this which causes the lines of the walls and the trees to meet at the angle at which they do and the figures of the retainers in the foreground to appear shortened.



10 The viraha of Damayanti

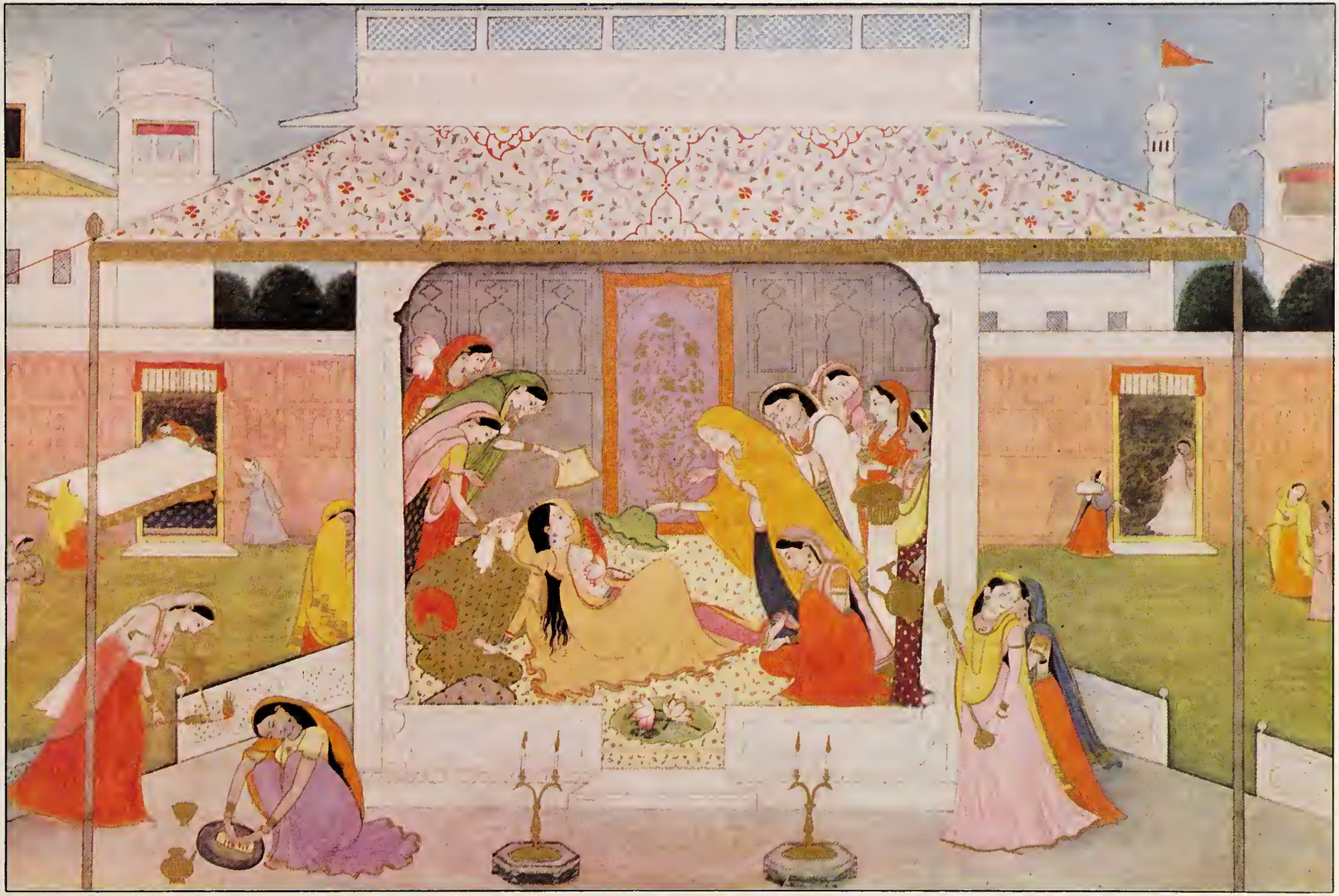
"Where was there a maiden to resemble her as she lay buried in grief from her beloved's absence, with a lotus placed on her bosom? Was she then Rati, lying in the flames of the funeral pyre to follow her dead husband, clasping on her bosom the (flowery) bow of her beloved?" IV. 21

"The Sandal paste applied by her to her heated bosom looked beautiful, with bubbles appearing on it, as if it were the moon with a retinue of stars accompanying it, coming on a visit to its friend Cupid residing in her heart." IV.28

"The moist, creepery lotus stalk applied by her to her bosom, burning with suffering caused by Cupid, faded completely, as if out of shame before the adjoining hands of Damayantī, which surpassed it in beauty." IV.34

In this exquisite painting the painter draws the viewer in completely and makes him a party to the anxiety that hangs thick in the air. It is not possible for Damayantī any longer to bear her separation from Nala; a 'fever' overtakes her. As she burns, everyone rushes to her with her own remedy. Damayantī herself bares her lovely bosom and applies to it the cooling flower and stalk of lotus but this is of little avail for surely the tender lotuses wilt at the touch of her body. The experienced old servant bending over her wonders at this as she slowly fans her with a large lotus leaf. In the group inside the chamber, others exert equally: one maid holds the conventional hand fan, another offers her a handkerchief, a third massages the soles of her feet to revive her, yet another holds some cooling balms on a platter. The rest stand about, one of them ready with a water jug and an ewer; but no one is unaware and there are whispers of concern and question everywhere. The news of Damayantī's distracted state reaches as far as the door at right where two maids talk even as they go about their appointed business. The twosome in the foreground are as involved as the maid who busily prepares sandal paste for applying it to the body of Damayantī and she who bends as she pours oil on a torch held in her left hand. There are others who are taking their own kind of measures. At the far end at left, two maids are carrying her bed out apparently to take it on the roof where the night breeze might cool the burning fever of Damayantī's love. While all this happens, the object of all this concern in staring into space as her hair fall loose and her lovely form is stretched out against a cushion.

The details are exceedingly delicate. One can take as an example the cloth screen of mauve and red with gold flowers that is exactly in the centre of the painting. The suggestion of uneven tension, the slight undulations in the binding cord that dangles against it are all painted with great precision. The same delicacy is seen in the twin lamps with swan heads, or in the meticulous way in which the disarranged hair of Damayantī are painted or the scalloped edge of her *peshwāz* is made to spread on the carpet. The most striking aspect of the painting, however, is its colouring which is rich and soft at the same time and which has a finish that is almost beyond compare.



11 Damayanti tormented by Clouds

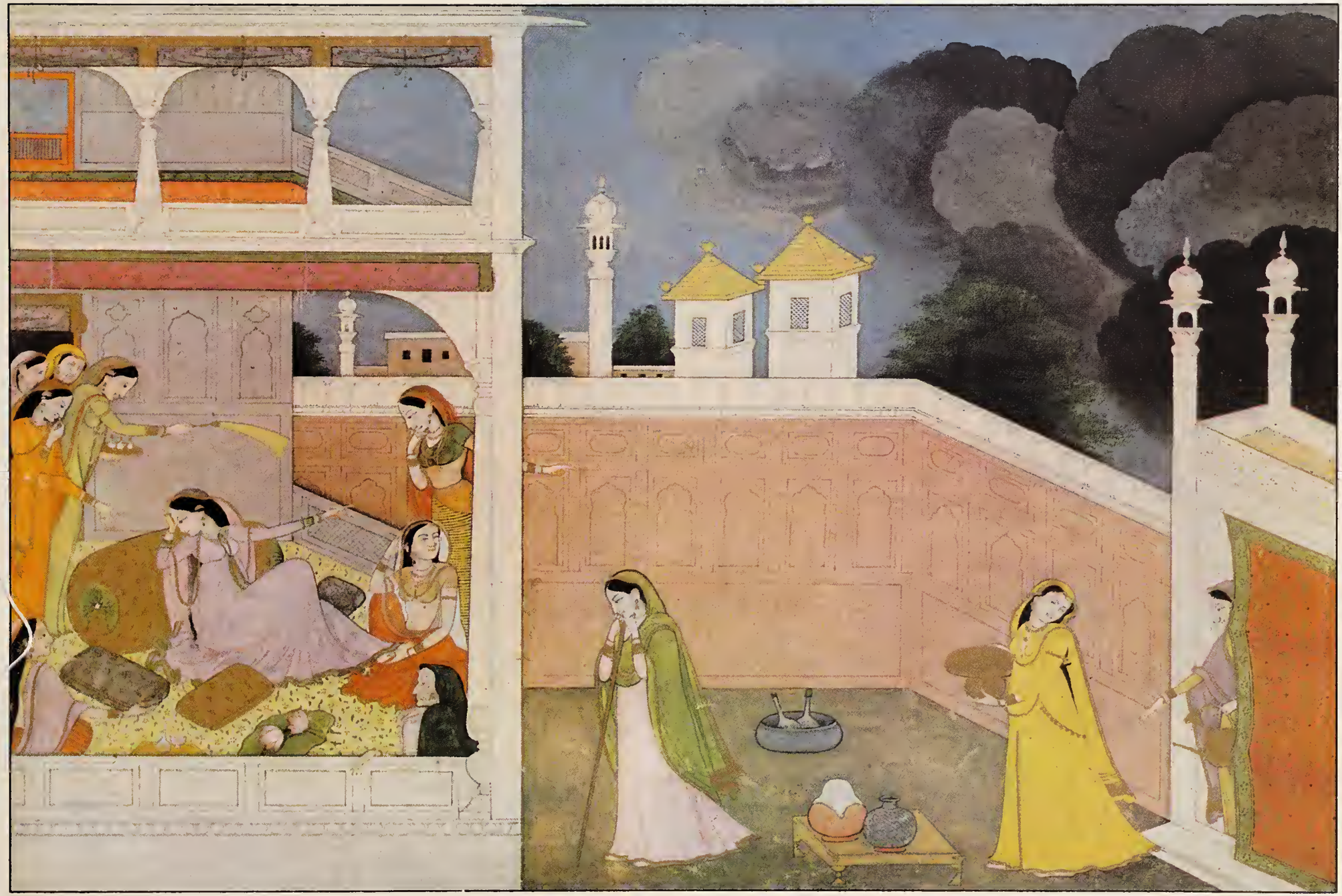
"The beautiful damsel, seeing a new rain-cloud, a cloudy weapon hurled by Cupid, discharged at him a suitable windy weapon in the guise of her longdrawn sighs." IV. 39

"The fair damsel, believing the south wind to be a windy weapon sent by Cupid, seemed to adopt for a snaky weapon the lotus stalks which she had taken for fear of Cupid's intense heat." IV. 40

There is nothing that assuages the love-pain of Damayantī. It is, if anything, aggravated by such things as dark clouds that rise in the sky, for the coming of the clouds is the season when lovers long to unite and those in separation pine. The friends and maids are still solicitious but nothing avails: lotuses, cushions, unguents and balms. And Damayantī points an accusing finger towards the clouds. As she does this, one of her friends repeats the gesture and she who is massaging the soles of her feet suddenly slows down, distracted, and turns to look at the 'enemy'. This is something that Damayantī cannot even bear to do and she turns her head away towards the group of maidens standing behind her. The old servant also does not look towards the clouds but then this is perhaps because she knows only too well what Damayantī's state means.

The clouds are brilliantly rendered. There is no suggestion of the sky being over-cast; it is the first appearance of the rain-clouds, an event that is so much celebrated in Indian music and poetry, that the painter portrays here. Softly, he varies their shades from the dusty puff that is at the extreme left to dark, water-charged billows that come sailing in from the right. The artist was here on familiar ground, for the subject of a maiden in separation tormented by rain-clouds is something he has painted many times before. What he does here is to weave this theme naturally into the sequence of descriptions of Damayantī's *viraha*.

The composition, in its essentials, is usual, with a loggia at the left, occupying a little less than half of the painting, and relatively less crowded space in the rest of the painting. There is, however, no bareness even in the other part and here there are details like the pitcher covered with a wet cloth on a *chaukī,* or a maid detaining the other as she walks ahead of her (almost saying that they should both go together towards the chamber) which are carefully studied from life.



12 Damayanti accusing the Moon

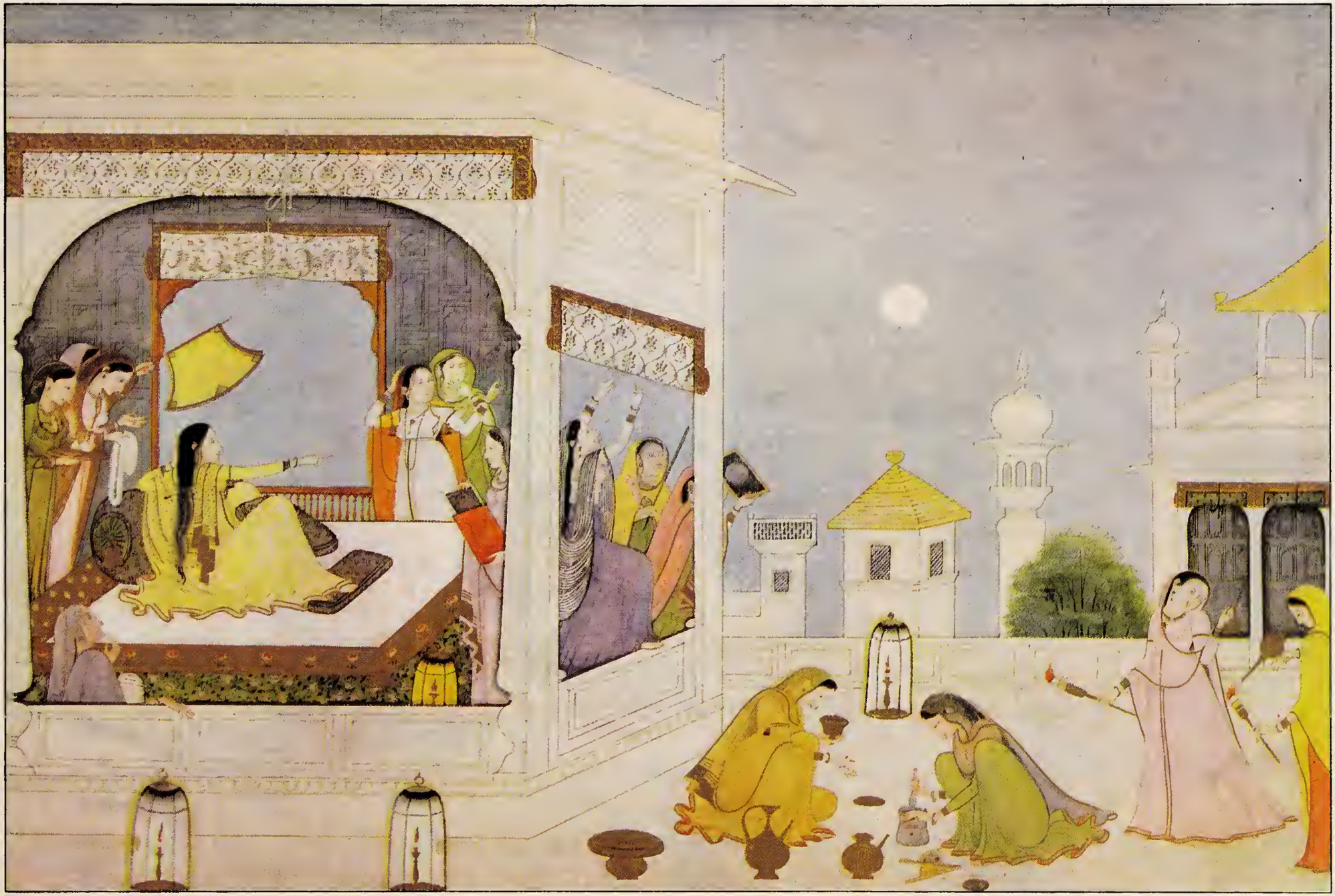
"Friend, ask the moon clearly this, 'Inert moon, from what teacher didst thou learn the generosity of thy heat? Is it from the poison that hath withered Śiva's throat, or from the submarine fire in the ocean?" IV. 48

" 'Dear, take in thy hand a heavy iron club, and take my mirror outside; as soon as the moon there enters, do thou kill that malefactor quickly with ease'." IV. 59

When there are no clouds in the sky, it is the moon which takes on the role of tormentor and Damayantī has no difficulty in recognizing the 'enemy'. Śrīharṣa's text goes on for the greater part of this Canto in which Damayantī in turn accuses first the moon and then Cupid for conspiring to inflict pain on separated lovers. The painter tries and condenses the suffering of Damayantī, and her charges against the two of them, in this painting. There is no slackness in the efforts of her friends and maidens to relieve her suffering; they still prepare balms and offer cooling garlands but the moment a maid rolls up the cloth screen facing Damayantī, she spots the cause of aggravation and points to the moon. At one point she decides to avenge herself on him by asking her friends to capture his reflection in a mirror and then break it; something which the friends prepare to do cheerfully.

The painting has all over it a soft moon-white colouring which distinguishes it from other paintings in this set and this is undoubtedly achieved by a transparent layer of white being laid after all the colours in the painting had been filled: even the beautiful deep blue floral border here is lighter than in the other paintings. In some respects this treatment recalls those paintings of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* set in the hand of another member of this artist family in which the Lord of the Autumn Moons dances his *rāsa* with *gopīs* in the forest of Vṛindāvana.

Among some of the interesting details worth noticing are the soft cloth case from which a friend takes out the large mirror, and the black soot that has gathered inside the glass covers placed over the burning candles. These candles, here as elsewhere, emit virtually no light and are there only to suggest that the time is that of night. If the light that is used by the artist here is not wholly abstract, as it so often is, it comes all from the full moon that bathes everything.



13 The swooning of Damayanti

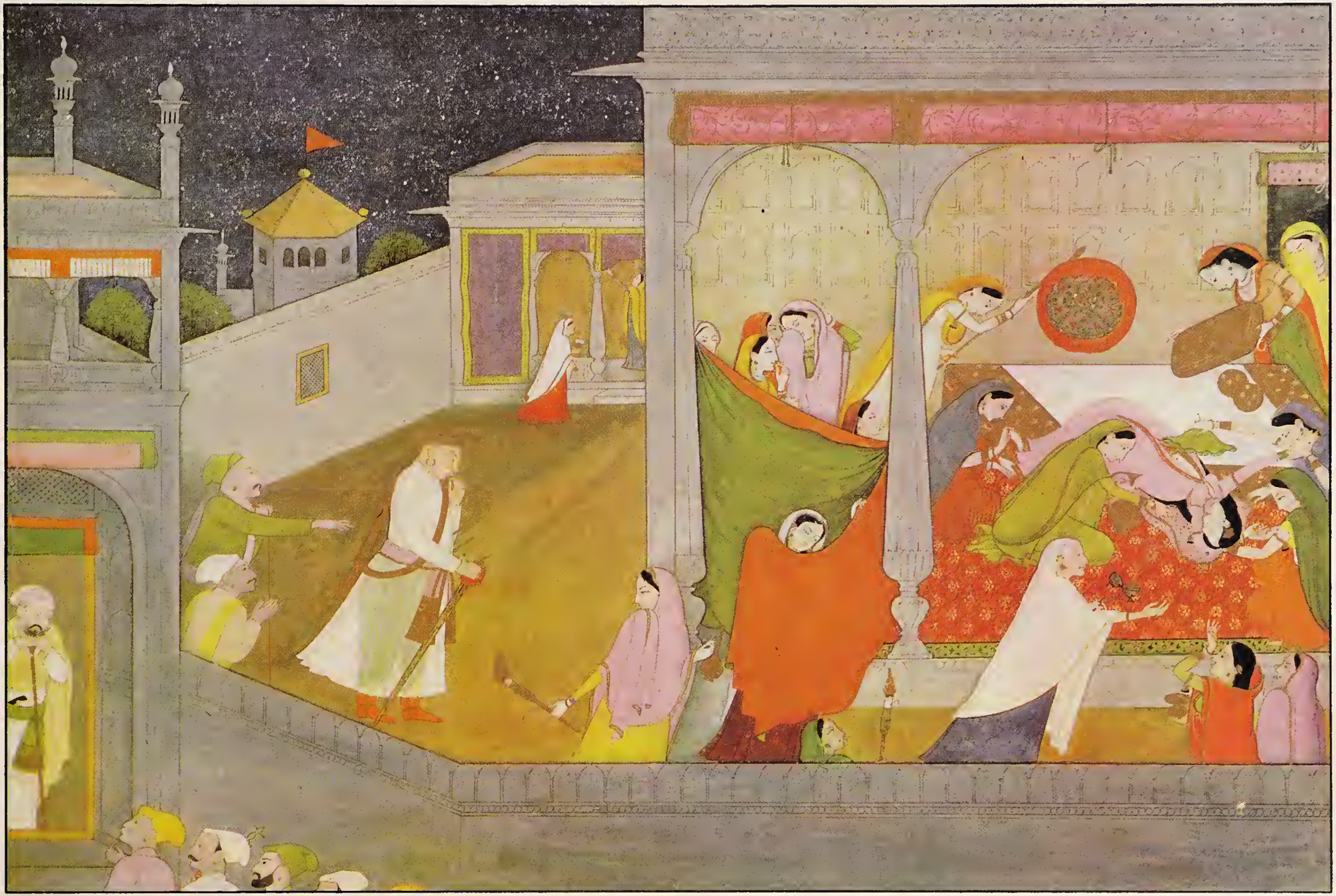
"Thus saying, immediately she fells into a swoon with Cupid's fire growing intense in her mind; prostrate with grief, how could she endure the loss, though but imagined, of the fragment of her hope." IV. 110

"Then the great minister of the king and the physician, owing to whose being in office there were no evils to disturb his daughter's inner apartments or the inner constitution of her body, both of them spoke to the king words that were alike. The former, 'Sire, listen. I know, everything from reliable reports and the statements of spies; none could overcome her grief, except one who would give her Nala'. The latter, 'Sire, listen I know everything from Śuśruta and the statement of Caraka; no expedient can suppress her heat, except the herb known as Nalada'." IV.116

As Damayanti, unable to bear the pain of separation from Nala, falls down in a swoon, concern turns into consternation and a commotion arises. Everyone rushes to her. There are some who fan her with whatever is handy, a lotus leaf, a fan, even a cushion. Maids hurry to rub her palms and soles to bring her around; the old servant hastens forward with a container of smouldering embers on which she has poured some crushed herbs for smoke to arise and cleanse the air; one of the friends sprinkles water on Damayanti's face. But nothing succeeds and some of the friends hide their faces behind veils and quietly weep. The news reaches Damayanti's father, King Bhīma, and he rushes to her apartment. Since he is accompanied by his minister and physician, an improvised screen of thick cloth is held by the maids out of modesty for the state of disarray in which Damayanti is.

The painter is able to invest this leaf with tremendous animation, and it is in a painting like this that we see him succeeding in identifying himself completely with the situation. It is as if he had been a personal witness to the event, for nothing jars in the picture and all elements combine to impart it a convincing air of truth. What is happening inside the chamber has sent a wave of concern everywhere, as it were. The king is naturally affected but so also are his counsellors and the people who begin gathering outside the gate of the inner apartments. In fact, the scene outside is wonderfully suggestive of people pouring in the manner in which their row, their figures gradually diminishing in size, seems to extend beyond the border, only the tip of the turban of the last man being visible here.

The characters of the minister, a Brahmin with a Śaiva *tilak* marks on his forehead, and of the physician are singularly true to life. A matter deserving of careful notice is the painter's having quite deliberately imparted a sombre air to the scene by setting it in a dark moonless night. This is not enjoined upon him in any way by the text and we can assign this only to his having visualised that the same scene bathed in moonlight would not make the same degree of impact. This, again, is the kind of painting which bears out Dr Coomaraswamy's observation (about the drawings of this set) that the artist seems to possess the amazing facility of drawing the human figure in every conceivable posture.



14 Narada visits Indra's Heaven

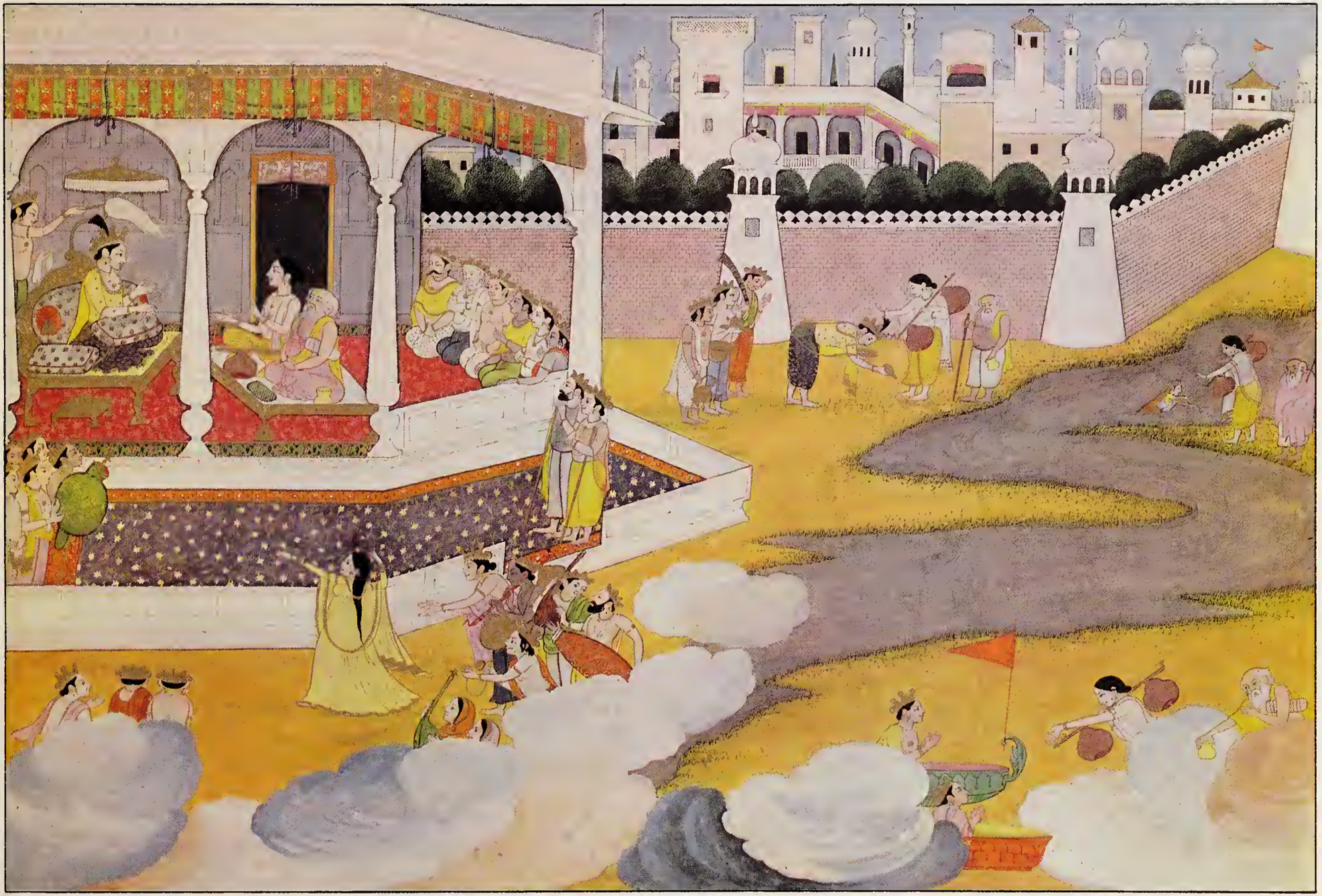
"Just as an ascetic attains the Absolute, beautiful with the plenitude of bliss, after crossing through the ocean of worldly existence without a beginning; similarly Nārada reached the mansion of Indra after going beyond the sky, whose depths are unfathomable." V.8

"Indra finely entertained the guest with a homage greater than what was due. For the good, to do just as much as is proper removes the sin (of omission), but brings no merit." V. 9

The convention of continuous representation in a painting as a device for suggesting sequence in time is seen here in its most developed form. Dating back to a very early period in India and a common feature of most schools of Indian painting, though not perhaps of the Moghul, this convention is consistently followed in the present set. But here we see Nārada and his companion, Parvata, represented as many as four times: first as they decline the offer of some of the gods to convey them through space in their *Vimānas,* then as they receive the homage of Mandākinī (Celestial Gaṅgā), again as they are welcomed by Indra and finally, as they receive seats of honour in Indra's Court.

It is not often that we see in this series a representation of a river; what appears here, therefore, is of special interest, for this is much the same river that flows through many a painting of the well-known *Gīta Govinda* or the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* series by other members of this artist family. The treatment of the clouds is appreciably different from that of the rain-clouds which torment Damayantī; this is because their *function* here is different. Here they serve only to give some suggestion of Indra's heaven being somewhere far above in space; but for them this would be an ordinary court, for there is nothing in the architecture or setting to distinguish them from the court and palaces of an earthly ruler as seen by the Pahari painter. The only other suggestion, besides the clouds, of this being a heavenly setting is perhaps in the golden hue of the ground, and the five-pointed crowns which all characters in heaven are shown as wearing.

There is special interest in the raised seat on which the sages Nārada and Parvata are seated, for in the preliminary master-drawing of the same scene the sages had been made to sit on the floor and this was pointed out for correction in a marginal note by the learned Paṇḍit who saw those drawings. Sages, according to him, were worthy of, as they are here, receiving special honour.



15 The gods going to Damayanti's Svayaṁvara

"One of the nymphs said to another, who wished to know what the matter was, Indra hearing some of her words, 'Look, this son of the sage Kaśyapa—Indra, the performer of a hundred sacrifices—is going to the earth." V. 53

"Then did the lords of the quarters, Agni, Varuṇa and Yama follow Indra with pleasure: let some one first show only the way ahead; he who follows his footsteps is not rare." V. 55

"Then they separately sent to Damayantī women messengers, expert in the stealing of hearts, and sent to her father presents concealed under a pretence of joy at his success in wars." V. 56

As the gods, Indra, Agni, Varuṇa and Yama leave their heaven for going to the earth to attend Damayantī's *svayaṁvara,* heaven looks somewhat desolate. The wives of the gods are seen in states of great dismay, for their lords are venturing out to win the hand of another. But the gods, all eager, do not even throw a glance behind as their *sārathīs* speed the chariots earthwards. The painter here shows easy familiarity with iconographical details, a matter in which he presumably and often received help from Paṇḍits. Indra is seen here with his thousand eyes, most of them concealed now under his robe and carrying his *vajra*. Agni, red in colour and flaming, is in his chariot drawn by rams; Varuṇa has his *pāśa* or noose that identifies him; and dark-bodied Yama carries his *daṇḍa* as he sits in his buffalo drawn *ratha*. There is, of course, the ubiquitous group of Gandharvas and Vidyādharas who proceed ahead of the gods and there are the standard bearers in a separate *vimāna* that precedes all. The group of men and women in the distance at right carry gifts and messages to the house of Damayantī on behalf of the gods.

It is interesting to see, once again, the painter's concept of heaven here which seems to be built atop an enormous cliff that rises sheer in the sky. It is equally interesting that the painter makes special effort to cover the points where the chariot wheels are supposed to touch the earth, with cloud forms, almost as if he fights shy of depicting them as resting on nothing but air. The *vimānas,* being heavenly devices, are, of course, another matter.



16 The gods see Nala on his way to the Svayaṁvara

"Then those great gods were taken to the earth by horses which quickly covered the distance; on the way, in a posture in which their necks were turned aside and raised, they heard a sound far away." V.58

"In it the great gods recognised Nala, the supreme reward of the existence of their eyes—Nala who used to delight in giving rest to his charioteer, and was expert in understanding the instinct of horses." V.60

There are three distinct parts of this painting. The greater part of the space is taken up by what happens in the foreground and here Nala, resplendent in his glory, is proceeding towards Kuṇḍinapura, followed by his considerable retinue and his chosen soldiers. It is this sight which the gods, as they come rushing in from heaven at the top left, see to their despair, and we see a little drama in that corner. They are filled with doubt if any of them would stand a chance against Nala in the *svayaṁvara,* but Indra, who is full of guile, has already thought of a plan and makes an assuring gesture in their direction. The third part of the painting, the distant city of Kuṇḍinapura, occupies a small corner at right; it is here that the fate of all these suitors will be decided. In a painting like this the painter begins to build up the suggestion of multitudes of men going to attend the *svayaṁvara,* something that reaches its climax in Plate 24. Beyond the beautifully painted tree in the right half, the processions of other suitors are seen on the march and small but extremely intelligently painted elephants give to that part a sumptuous air.

It is interesting to see the painter conceiving Kuṇḍinapura as situated on top of a hill. This is how he saw the town of Kangra or Haripur-Guler or Basohli when he went out and this is his concept of what a royal city looks from the distance. Another interesting detail is the little white structure on top of the low hill at left which is so true a rendering of outposts that Pahari rulers had constructed on vantage points overlooking approaches to their principal cities.

The little tree against flowering bushes at left is vividly painted and if there are not more of these in this set as they are in the *Gīta Govinda* paintings, it is apparently because in this setting they would distract attention from the narrative which is the principal point of many of these paintings.



17 The gods make Nala their emissary

"Noticing the dumbfounded look of his followers thinking, 'What is to be done?', Indra, expert in guile as he was, with a view to deceiving Nala, said loudly." V. 73

"Nala to thee we have come as suppliants; know this to be the gist of our words; after taking rest for a while, we shall communicate our business to thee." V. 77

"Moon of the earth, we desire that festive occasion—marriage with Damayanti; conqueror of Cupid, act thou as our messenger in this matter, casting aside for ever the fear of Cupid." V. 99

"Thus hearing these flattering words of the group of gods, the king, though in love with Damayantī undertook the mission forcibly imposed on him. When he gave his consent, Indra said to him in great joy, 'Let the power of being invisible be everywhere subject to thy will'." V. 137

Indra is seen here putting his deceitful plan into action. He and the gods stop Nala, and disarming him by appearing as suppliants, talk him into being their emissary to Damayanti to plead their cases with her. Since Indra, the cleverest of the four gods, is their spokesman, he steps forward here and converses with Nala on behalf of the other three which he indicates with a gesture. As he speaks, the other gods wait anxiously for the outcome. But the outcome is not very uncertain for Nala, as we see him here with folded hands, is devoted to the gods and will not disobey them. In any event, he has already committed himself to do their bidding the moment he was asked by them for a favour. The painter understands perfectly the role of the gods as suppliants and so he shows them standing on the same footing as Nala, stationing their chariots at some distance. Nala is naturally on his feet, having dismounted. Nala's mount, interestingly, has changed here from the previous picture. His chariot is not to be seen and it is a horse that he seems to have got down from, since the horse occupies a prominent position at left. But this seeming 'inconsistency' or lack of continuity does not bother the artist in the same way as it is of no consequence to Śrīharṣa.

There is a noticeable lack of evenness in the quality of finish of the various figures. The attention and skill which has been bestowed upon the two central figures, Indra and Nala, does not appear to have been consistently employed and some of the figures, for example, Yama and the youthful retainer with a *morchhal,* are more summarily executed. This could owe itself either to a relative lack to interest in these persons or to the fact that another hand, that of a collaborating artist or disciple, was responsible for these. Such a possibility is wholly conceivable.



18 Nala enters Damayanti's inner apartments

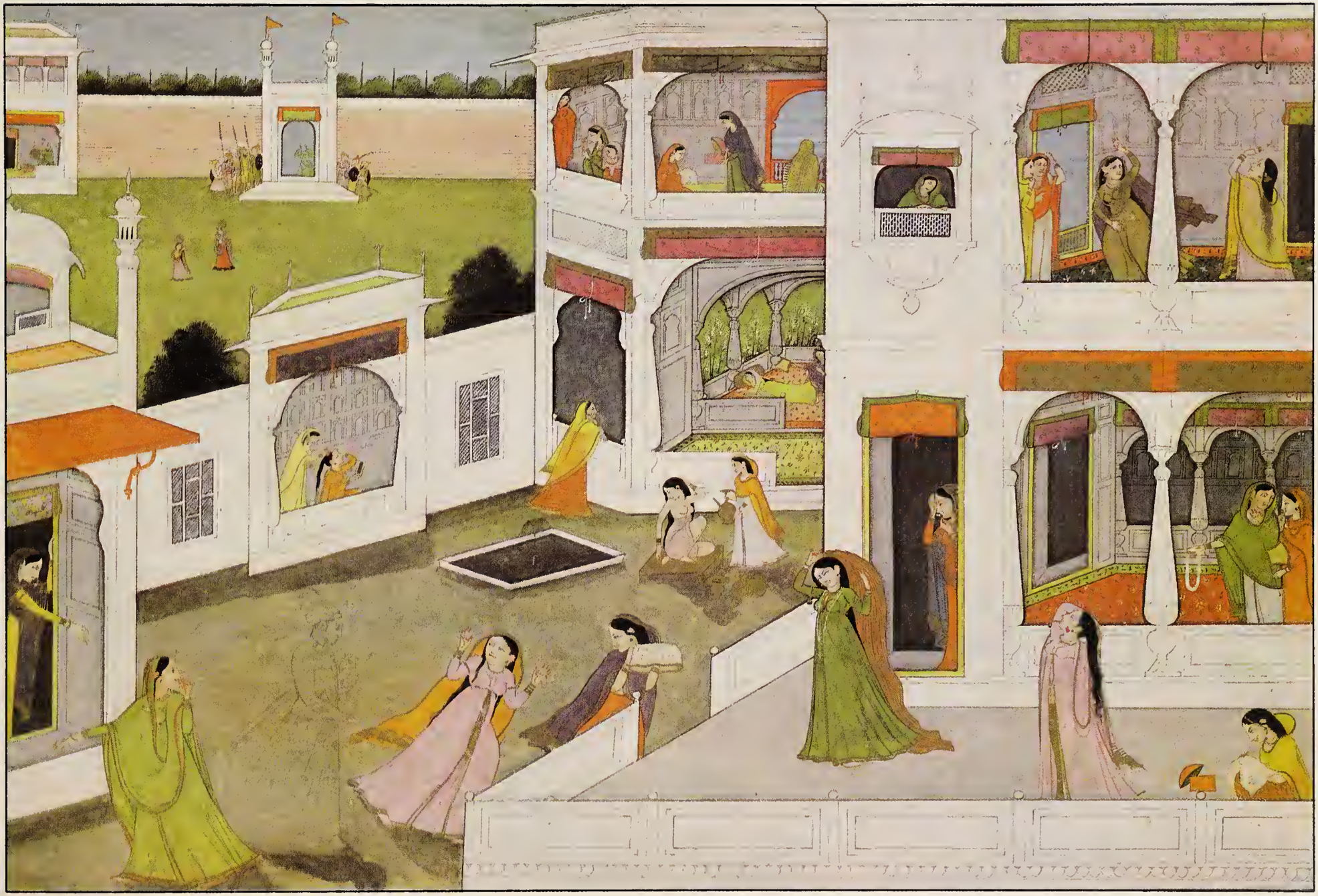
"Having closed his eyes, on seeing in the inner apartment a young woman, who had uncovered her thighs to paint them, he was startled to have jostled another maid who was passing by." VI. 13

"As he was delivering a little the message of the divine lords of the directions to the figure of his beloved called up by his imagination, he was brought to his senses by the shout of the many timid girls, who were frightened by the voice coming from an invisible source." VI. 17

"Seeing (first) the root of the arms as a girl was binding her hair, then the breasts as she was painting them, and then the navel as her clothing got loose, he thereafter closed his eyes, having had his eyes drawn here and there by degrees." VI. 20

The painting is remarkable for two reasons: for the exquisite skill with which the invisible form of Nala is drawn by the artist and for the series of little vignettes that are brought all together here. One cannot visualise a better way in which an invisible presence could have been rendered. The artist draws, in the most delicate possible manner, just the outline of Nala's form so that even the viewer has to strain himself a little to detect it. But once that is done, it is not difficult for him to imagine the commotion inside the apartments at the touch of an unseen body or the hearing of a disembodied voice. In some way the viewer, knowing the secret of Nala's invisibility, becomes identified with him and then sees and understands startled reactions all around. For the most part, however, normal activity goes on in the palace and unmindful of the presence of the newcomer, maidens are seen busy, whiling away time by playing the game of ball-throwing, or adorning themselves, or simply conversing as they must have done such a great deal, in royal female apartments. Some of the subjects are perfectly familiar. The young girl who is having her hair combed as she sees herself in a mirror is seen so often as a subject proper treated of by the Pahari painter. The lady at her bath is another small detail from this painting that is the subject of a number of full studies. And then there are the stock characters: a girl re-arranging her veil, another archly lifting her right arm and then flexing it at the elbow to play with her hair, the maid preparing *pāns* for her mistress. Altogether there is a great air of ease and informality and there is no focal point to the activity. It is this situation that Nala comes upon unawares.

We see here once again a pre-occupation with falling shadows. In this painting, however, they are all brought in to serve a definite purpose. The invisible form of Nala does throw a shadow which provides Śrīharṣa with occasion for inventing new situations. Since his shadow falls, the painter, in an unusual and somewhat unsuccessful attempt at consistency, shows shadows of some other figures and some of the walls also falling.



19 Damayanti garlanding invisible Nala

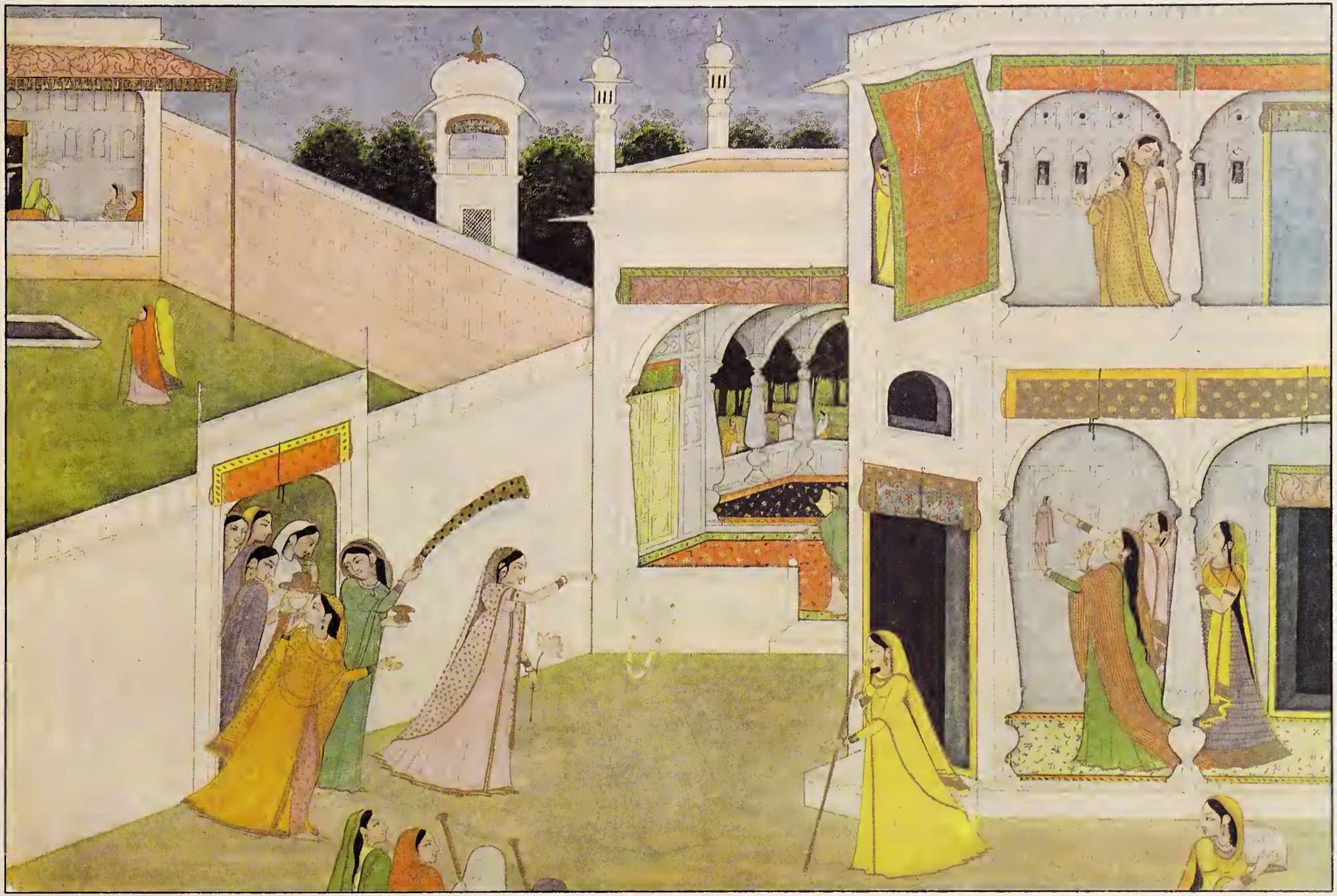
"It was wonderful that the forlorn king, by becoming invisible, by spreading out a series of bodies in the shape of his reflections on the bejewelled floors, and by entering the upper storey of another's mansion shone like an ascetic (who also becomes invisible at will, assumes a plurality of bodies, and enters the body of another)." VI. 46

"The beautiful Damayantī came across Nala on the way, as she was coming, after paying obeisance to her mother; but he could not distinguish her among the illusory Damayantīs (seen by him), nor did she see him owing to his being invisible." VI. 48

"A wreath of flowers, obtained from her mother as a favour, though thrown by her at Nala's neck, having seen him in an illusion, did actually reach him as he was standing close by." VI. 49

The presence of Nala in his invisible form continues here to cause strange things to happen. As he comes up unexpectedly on the upper-storey—we can barely make out the faint outline of his form in the doorway—he is reflected in the series of mirrors set in the wall causing great wonder. The impossibility of Nala being reflected in the mirrors in this manner from where he is standing, or the fact that the girls do not see their own reflections, does not disturb the painter at all. The entire situation demands that willing suspension of disbelief upon which so much of our enjoyment of works like these is dependent. In the lower storey the friends of Damayantī see another sight which causes everyone such amazement: a portrait of Damayantī painted on the wall which was not there before. This, of course, is the portrait that Nala had painted there idly as he stood there for a moment. But the principal action of the painting is elsewhere. The garland that Damayantī had received from her pleased mother and which, in her reverie, she was placing around the neck of Nala, does in fact fall around the neck of the real Nala who stands before her in invisible form. This strange happening is seen alike with wonder and disbelief not only by Damayantī but by her friends and attendants. Even at some distance the maid carrying a tray covered with a cloth at bottom right turns her head to notice what is going on, as does the maiden on the upper storey who had lifted the cloth screen to watch the return of Damayantī.

The painter has subtle ways of indicating depth and one of these is to vary the light that falls on the flat areas in different planes. Thus the soft grey inner walls with niches that appear almost everywhere are contrasted with the glistening white outer walls, a suggestion of distance being in this manner made. There is in this painting, in addition, a bolder attempt in the same direction. The greys become darker inside open doors and a bold flat area of black in which this gradation ends stands for considerable depth inside. None of this is of course purely scientific but as a device it succeeds. In any case, it creates in the middle of vivid areas of colour solid black areas which offset them and lend decided weight to the picture.



20 Damayantī receiving a gift from Indra

"The garland of Pārijāta flowers, a favour from Indra, presented by the woman saying this, and heartily accepted by Damayantī, filled with its fragrance all Āśās (directions), excepting the Āśā (hope) of Nala." VI. 86

"Bowing in honour of Indra with that very garland (on her head), Damayantī with the corners of her lips slightly brightened by a smile, replied to the messenger, after she had restrained each of her friends (from further speech), by making a sign with her eyes." VI. 90

Even before Nala has a chance to act as a messenger of the gods, Damayantī has another visitor from them, a female messenger who arrives full of persuasive words and carrying a rare gift, a garland of Pārijāta flowers from Indra's own garden. Damayantī shows every respect for the gift—here she gently touches it to her eyes and forehead—and hears what the messenger has to say, but her mind is unmoved. And she tells this in no uncertain manner to the messenger, much to the delight of Nala who has the privilege of being able to hear all this because of his invisibility. But the turning away of the messenger fills some of her friends with surprise and disappointment, for to them there appears no greater honour on earth than receiving a request from Indra himself. Some of them, after hearing the message of Indra, in fact speak out aloud urging Damayantī to accept the request of Indra. It is not clear as to what the group of girls going away at bottom right is wondering about, unless it be that these are the maids who brought in diverse gifts from the gods and are going away wonder-struck at the beauty of Damayantī and the splendour of her own small court.

There is much that goes on in the other parts of the painting both at right and left. Orders are being conveyed and received and commonplace activity is seen. Inside the main chamber, however, attention needs to be paid to the group of female musicians who play on different instruments, *a mṛdaṅgam, a vīṇā,* a *tānpurā* and a flute. These performers, lovely as they are, are no different from any of the other women in the picture. Theirs are generalized faces that belong to a type. In fact the musician with the *vīṇā* is almost exactly like Damayantī herself. These musicians from this standpoint offer a contrast to the highly individualised faces of male musicians that appear in other paintings even from this set itself. This comes undoubtedly from the fact that the male musicians are almost certainly modelled on men whom the painter had seen in real life. That kind of female portraiture is, however, rarely seen in Pahari paintings.



21 The conversation of Nala and Damayanti

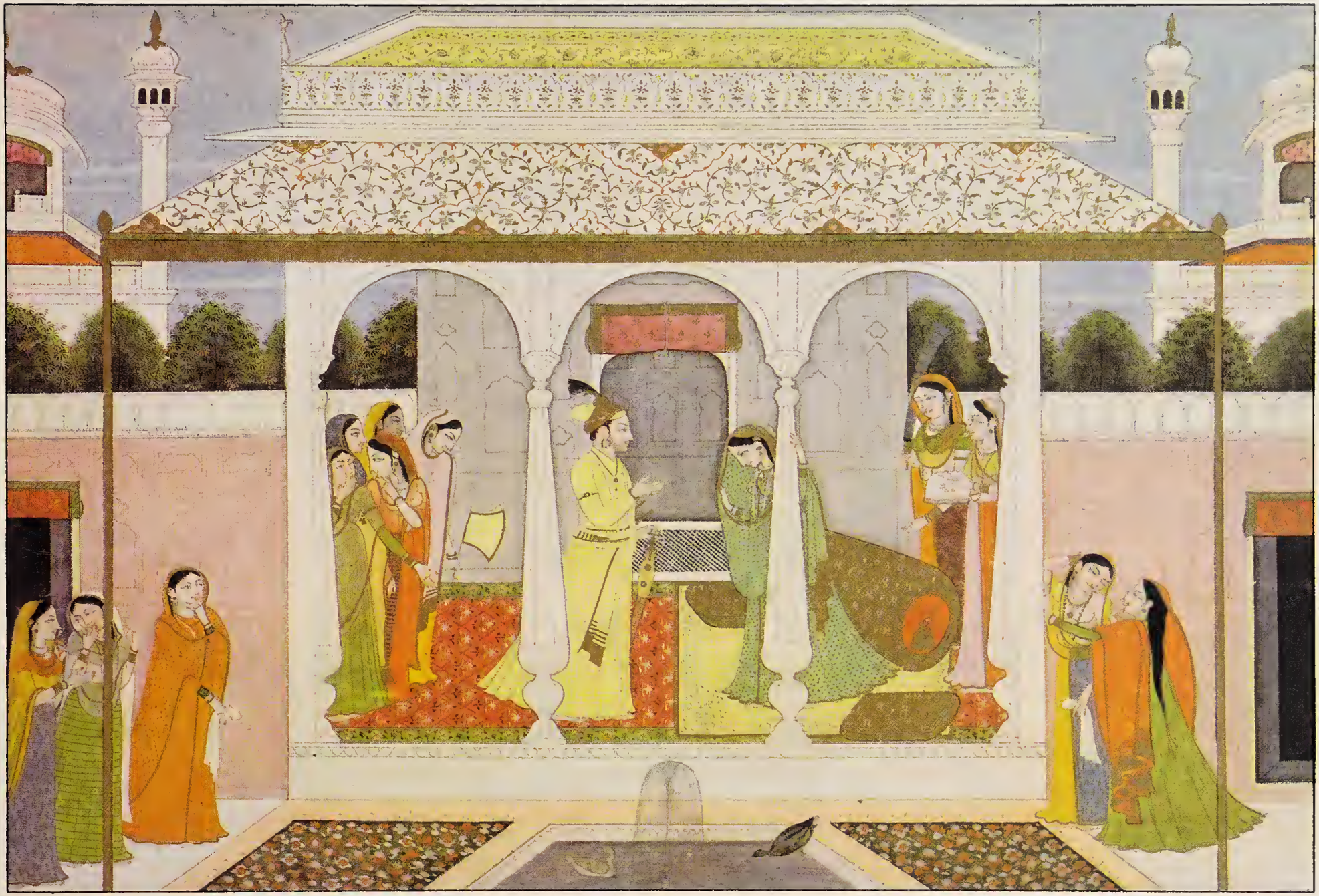
"Then the king considered his desire fulfilled by the mere sight of the princess, the desire that had previously grown rank in respect of attaining his beloved, enjoying her company and the like." VII.I

"It was on her high bosom that Nala's eyes took refuge, when the ocean of his passion swelled up, overflowing its extensive shore, in contact with the nectar-flow of the vision of the moon of her face." VII. 4

"Thus describing the gazelle-eyed maiden, beginning with her hair and ending with the nails of her feet, the king whose heart was swimming in an ocean of amazement, and whose joy was overflowing his heart, made up his mind to make himself visible to Damayantī surrounded by her friends." VII.108

The female messenger from Indra gone, Nala assumes his normal form and comes face to face with Damayantī. This sudden materialization of a male inside the innermost female apartments quite naturally causes surprise but there is no consternation, no panic, for everyone seems to be lost in regarding the beauty of Nala and impressed by his noble bearing. Damayantī suddenly gets up and offers him her own seat not even knowing who he is. But Nala declines the offer gracefully and discloses the fact that he is a mere emissary come here on behalf of the gods. Then begins that long and complicated conversation in which Nala returns again and again to his theme of asking Damayantī to agree to choose one of the four gods, a subject in which Damayantī has no interest; for her mind is fixed on Nala and no one else. Throughout the conversation which takes the painter as many as five paintings to cover, the interest of Damayantī is to find out through direct questions who the emissary himself is. This idea of a long conversation being represented by more than one painting of the same content is something that also occurs in sanguine drawings of the *Rāmāyaṇa* by Ranjha where the instructions of the master artist are that *saṁvād* is to be suggested through two paintings, fairly alike, of the same theme.

The artist makes several points here but does it all in low key. Damayantī, shy and flustered at the same time, places her hand on the pillar as if to steady herself in that moment. The pair of ducks in the cistern are perhaps deliberately brought in because they are traditionally regarded as symbols of conjugal attachment. But, with all this, the painting remains slightly stiff because of its excessive reliance on symmetry. This is something that the artist does not often do in this series for he is aware both of the temptation and the danger of doing this. But the way in which architectural features and flower beds, etc. are exactly repeated from right to left makes one wonder if the artist paid the same amount of attention to this painting as he did to the others.



22 The Swan speaks again to Nala and Damayanti

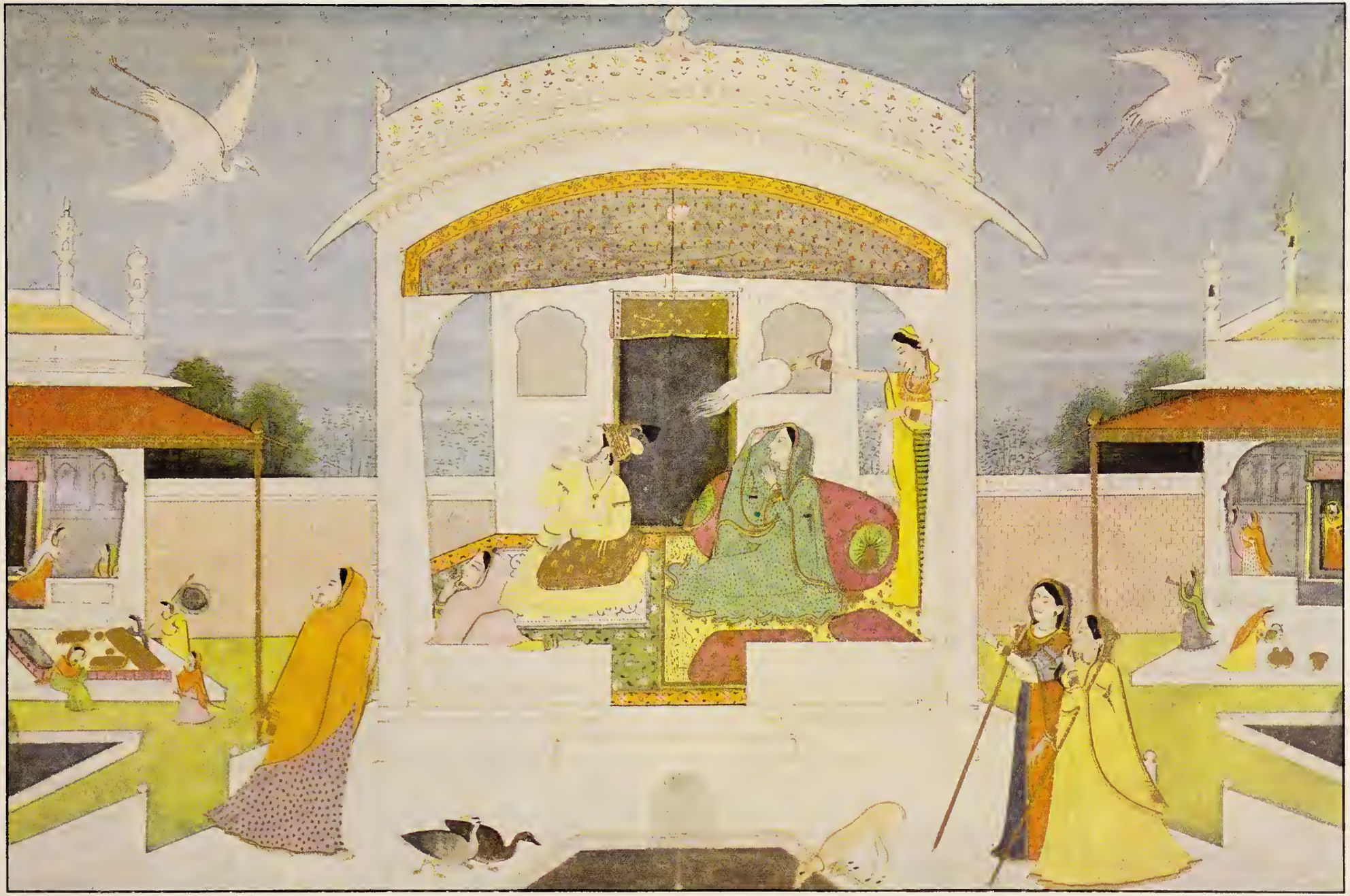
"As Nala was thus deploring the disclosure of his identity, brought about by himself under a mighty wave of delusion, the kind-hearted golden swan king came along swiftly, wishing to extricate him, as he lay thus buried in grief." IX. 127

"To Nala, who looked up at the sound of its wings, saying, 'Here is that bird', said the swan, 'Cruel one, bring her not to extreme despair; after this she will surely die. Being conscious of thy offence in respect of the gods, having exerted thyself so much for the success of their affair, thou need not be a false witness; the pure-heartedness of the good has themselves for witness'." IX. 128-129

The same relative stiffness of composition that is there in the preceding painting characterises this leaf also. The architectural details on either side of the central loggia are identical and there is a minimum of variation in the placing of figures and the distribution of activity in the background. This feature, combined with a slight falling off in the finish of the two principal figures, and some comparative shortness of the maids makes one wonder if this is not the work, at a slightly later date, by a disciple of the master-artist who painted the greater part of this set. The colour of the dress worn by Damayantī is certainly unusually sharp and there is appreciable difference in the appearance of Nala here and his appearance in earlier pictures of this very theme and sequence. The flying in of the swan is well rendered as is his going away. The brevity of his stay in which he asks Nala to reveal his identity to Damayantī and urges Nala not to feel any guilt on account of his failure in the mission entrusted to him by the gods, is hinted at by the fact that the swan is not seen perched somewhere; he simply flies in and then out.

The ducks appear here again as does the pet fawn. They introduce a certain softness of touch in an otherwise slightly hard painting. But they also possibly, at another level, refer to conjugal fidelity on the one hand and the snares of love on the other.

The pavilion in which Nala and Damayantī are seated is here of a shape different from the one in which Nala originally appeared. But then this also, like the colour of the dresses worn both by Nala and Damayantī, keeps on changing.



23 Damayanti lost in her thoughts

"As Damayantī, in her anxiety to meet her beloved on the morrow, was rapidly shedding streams of tears—streams with reeds in the shape of high and low thrills on the surface of her cheeks, even that one night consisting of four watches was hard for her to pass, owing to her pangs of love; so it seems the Creator decreed all nights to have three watches, in mercy to her." IX. 158

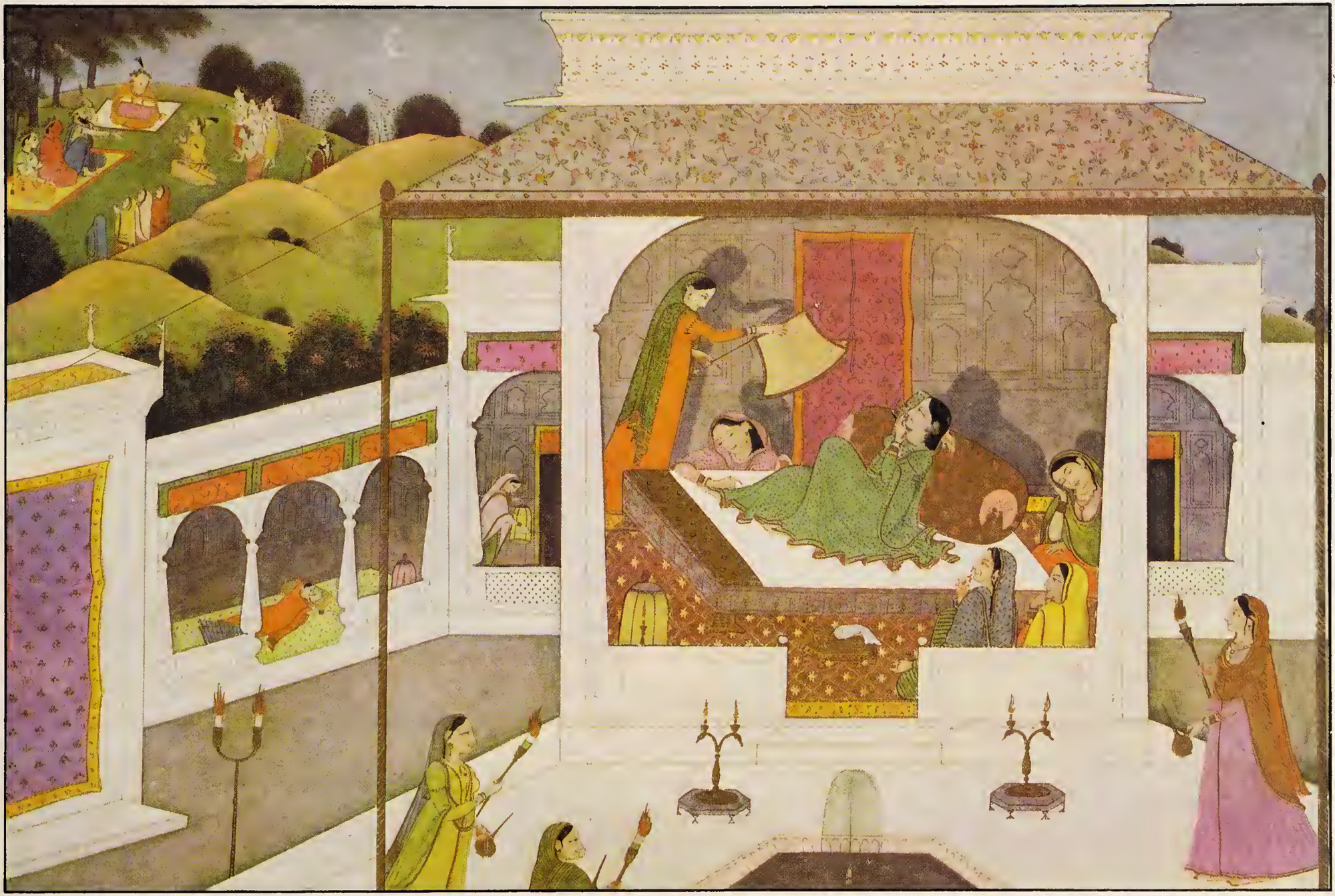
"To those gods, Indra and the others, capable of visualizing the story of everything that ever happens to the people of the three worlds, the king quickly and sorrowfully related the whole truth of his mission to her as it actually took place." IX. 159

All that is left for Damayantī to do now is to wait for the morning when the all-important event will take place. She has given out her mind first to the female messenger of the gods and then to Nala; there is no doubt within herself as to what she wants. But a measure of uncertainty, a slight fear of the unknown, still remains, for who knows what the morrow might bring. The gods are perfectly capable of thinking of something else; Nala is conscientious and having accepted the commission of the gods, might yet waver. This keeps Damayantī wondering and awake. The night is apparently advanced, the candles are about to go out and some of her maids are falling off to sleep. But Damayantī is completely absorbed in her thoughts.

At top left, Nala is seen reporting the failure of his mission to the gods. They all were waiting for him even though the time is that of night. The female messenger also, with her friends, waits there having perhaps said her own piece. If there is an air of expectation and uncertainty in Damayantī's chamber, there is despair where the gods are.

The awkward attempt of the painter to depict exact shadows is to be seen here inside the chamber and he seems to suggest that these shadows are caused by the light of the candle burning under the glass-case at the foot of Damayantī's bed. But he chooses to ignore the possibility of other lights, like torches and candles on swan-shaped stands also throwing shadows.

This is not an exciting painting and serves more the purpose of advancing the story further than of making a significant contribution to the set. But then, in a group of pictures like this, something like this is only to be expected.



24 Princes going to the Svayaṁvara

"Then came to the Svayaṁvara highborn princes in chariots, expert in arms and the Scriptures, beautiful like Cupid's magic forms, and surpassing Kubera in wealth." X.1

"No highborn prince was there who was not the object of Cupid's arrows nor any who did not go; as the crowds of kings were going simultaneously, not even a trace of the earth remained without being a path." X.2

This sumptuous painting, full of so much of colour and animation, comes as a climax to the paintings in which the painter has been consistently suggesting the growing crowds of kings and princes who eagerly make for Kuṇḍinapura in the hope of winning Damayanti's fair hand. And here we see that suppressed air of excitement and that capacity to treat crowds which the painter is so skilled at showing. He uses great variety everywhere: there are people on elephants and horses and palanquins and on foot; even among those on elephant-back there is no exact repetition of the way they are seated; the human types are taken from a truly wide range and the dresses worn by the princes and nobles offer him a wonderful opportunity to orchestrate in colour so that the eye leaps from saffron yellow to orange red, to sage green, to light pink, to white, to madder brown and so on. There is a clear attempt at establishing characters of various persons: if the princes appear reasonably collected, among the nobles and retainers there are the confident types, others who cannot contain their excitement, still others who are subject to doubt or wonder or despair. The painter cannot resist the temptation even of showing the fact that the gods seem to be in no great hurry; at top left we see them still dressing up. Perhaps, the suggestion we are supposed to take is that they are certain of their mounts taking them quicker than anyone else to Kuṇḍinapura. Or, is it perhaps that he hints at their already having lost heart?

Nala is not specifically brought in any of the groups. The most prominent prince is he who is inside the dome-roofed *howdah* on the back of the largest elephant, but then here this prince is unlikely to be Nala since he is shown as younger, being almost completely unbearded. The principal elephant and the arrangement of the group of persons on its back strongly invites comparison with the series of paintings from Guler in the Chandigarh Museum in which each succeeding ruler is shown with the heir-apparent sitting behind him in the *howdah*.



25 King Bhima receiving guests

"King Bhīma, the lord of the heaven Kuṇḍina, finely entertained the kings, accommodating them in beautiful palaces, with hospitality, courteous words, gifts, esteem, politeness and the like." X. 27

"None of the kings who were the guests of king Bhīma, the Indra of Kuṇḍina, experienced, in this and that mutually unseen act of hospitality, the slightest distinction, which could serve as an index to what they wanted to know, the attainment of their hearts' ḍesire." X. 29

"Methinks, that multitude was contained in the bosom of the city of the king of Vidarbha, as the ocean was in the palm of Agastya, or the universe in the stomach of Viṣṇu.' X.30

There is nothing which delights the Pahari painter more than animated activity and here he has a field day. The actual reception of the prince in the middle, with Bhīma bowing to him, occupies only a small part of the painting, for all the entourage including ministers, soldiers, falconers and even a paṇḍit being carefully shown. The interest of the painter really is in such areas as the main street of the city that we see at top right, the encampment at top left and the tent being set up so busily in the foreground. The getting up of the tent is a wonderfully observed cameo: a servant pulls hard at the rope to gain the right amount of tension as his companion drives the peg in the ground with all his might using his huge arc-shaped wooden hammer; one of the servants quickly unrolls the *kanāt* as his co-worker straightens its folds and holds it in place in a corner; two other servants have lost no time for they have already spread the striped *satranji* carpet and are carrying in a bed. All over the painting a great deal is happening: men are moving in with loads; some panegyrists are receiving rewards for their compositions; boastful princes are busy discussing their prospects with their companions; a procession just arriving passes through the *bazaar* in which shop-keepers sit inside their cubicles, open-fronted shops; animals who have carried men and supplies to the encampment have been allowed to rest.

The painter is able dexterously to vary architectural shapes so that there is no dullness, no oppressive feeling, caused by an excess of them. He may not have succeeded in creating the feeling of a great sprawling city, but he is convincingly able to capture the bustling air of a place that is beginning to hum with activity. The golden-yellow colour of the ground everywhere is brought in not only to lend richness to the painting in general but also to go with the text, for Śrīharṣa pays to it considerable attention in his verses.



MONOCHROME PLATES

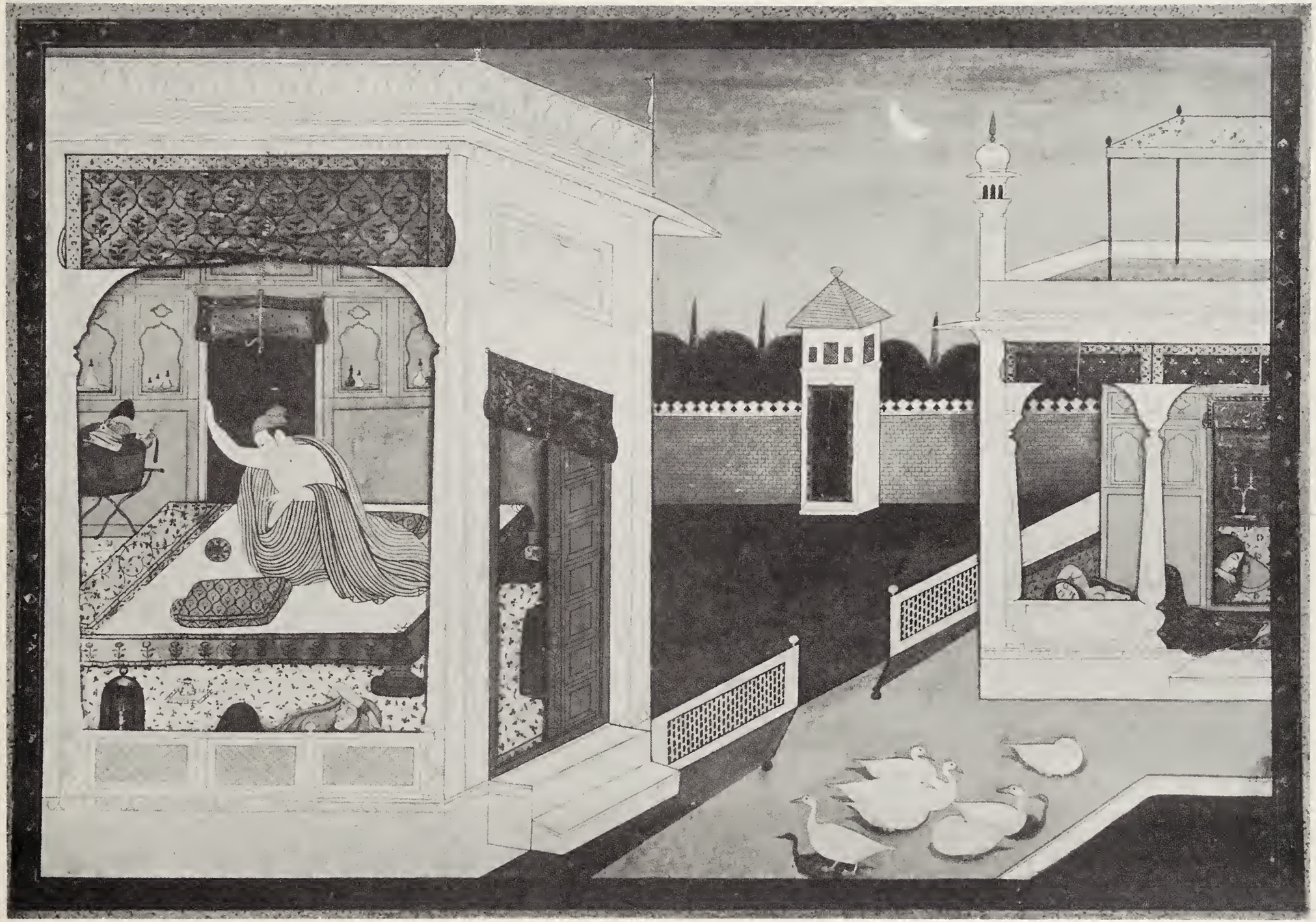


Plate 26 The torment of love

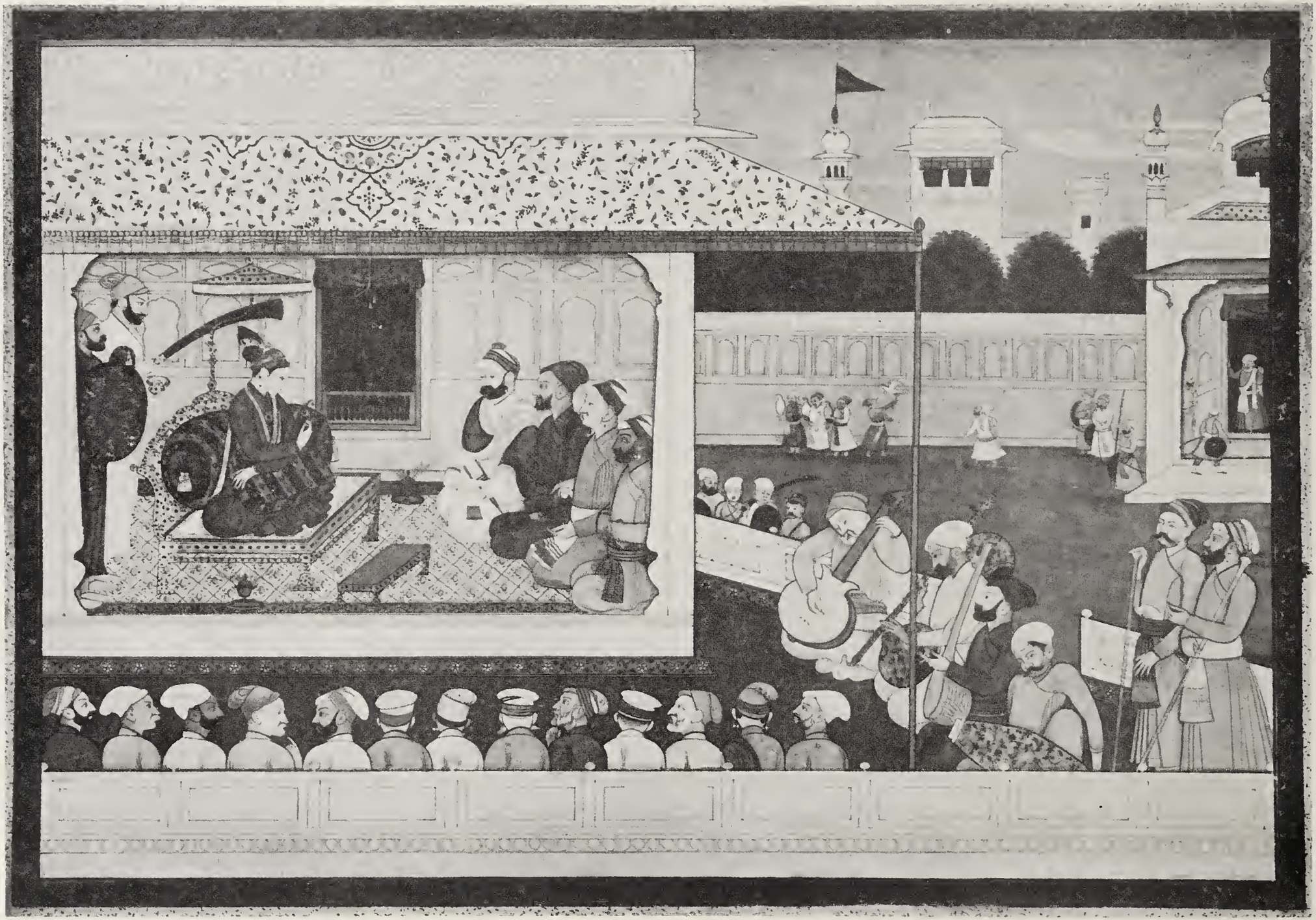


Plate 27 Nala sitting distracted in the Assembly

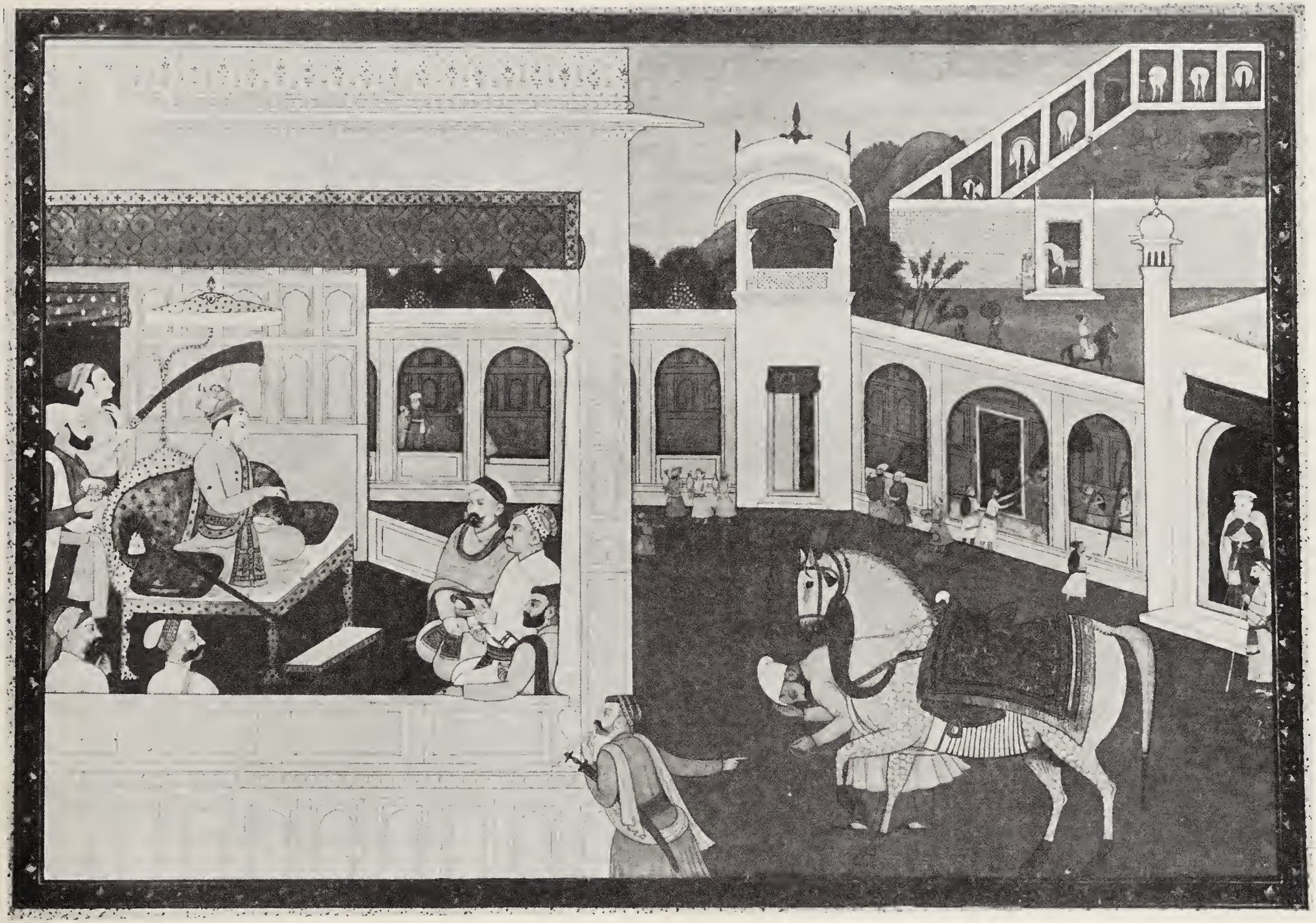


Plate 28 Nala sends for his horse

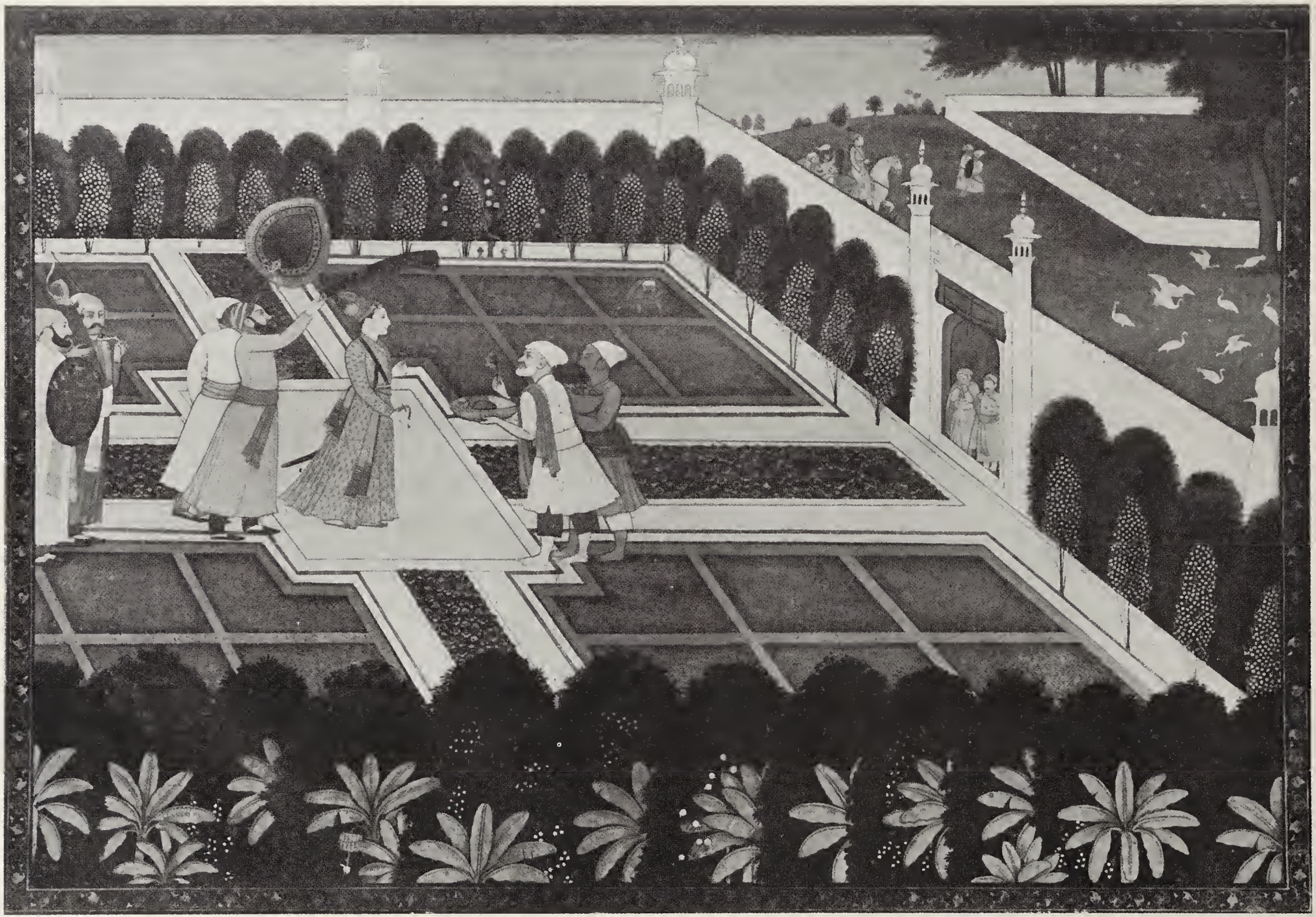


Plate 29 Nala in the garden

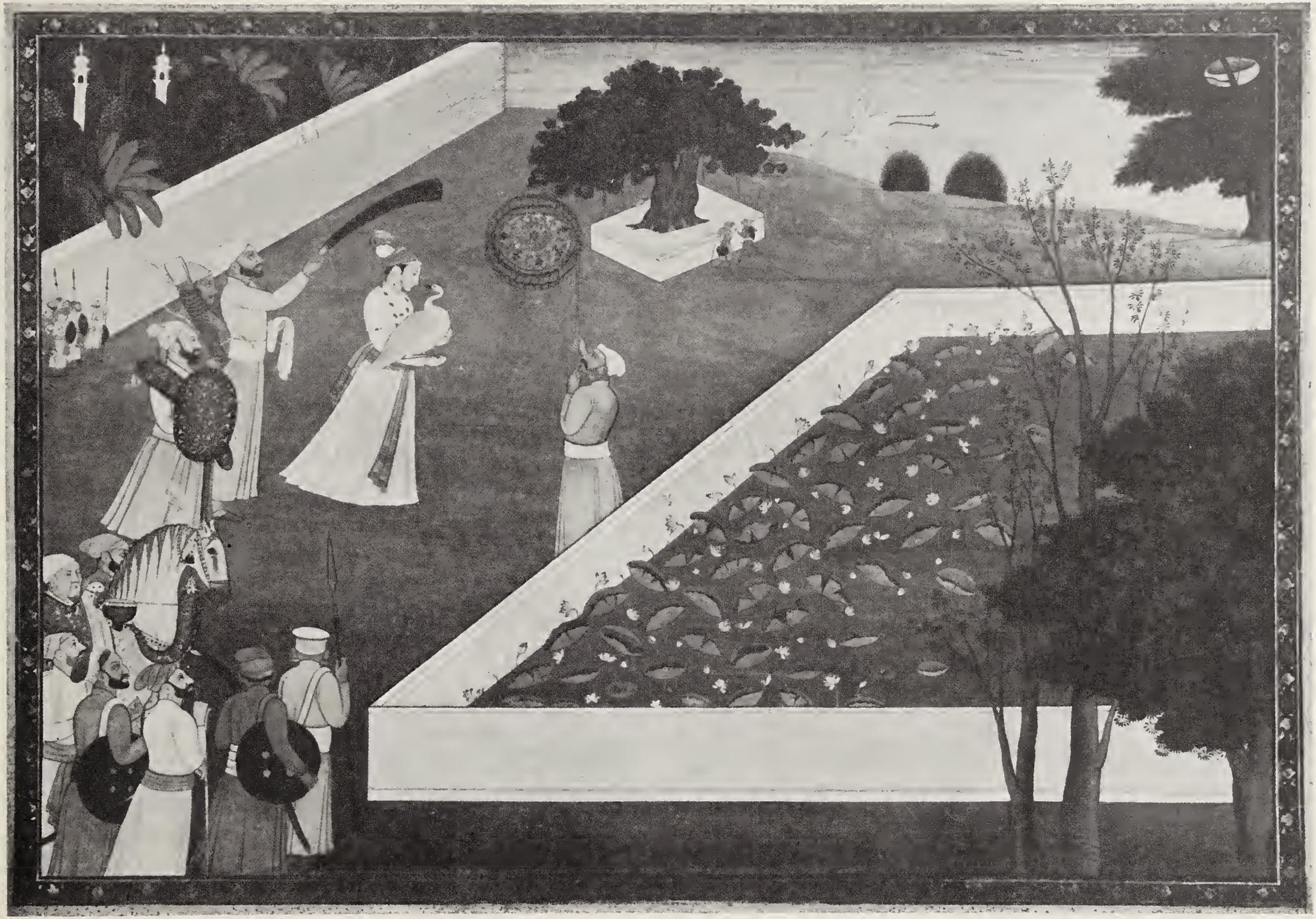


Plate 30 The Swan speaks to Nala

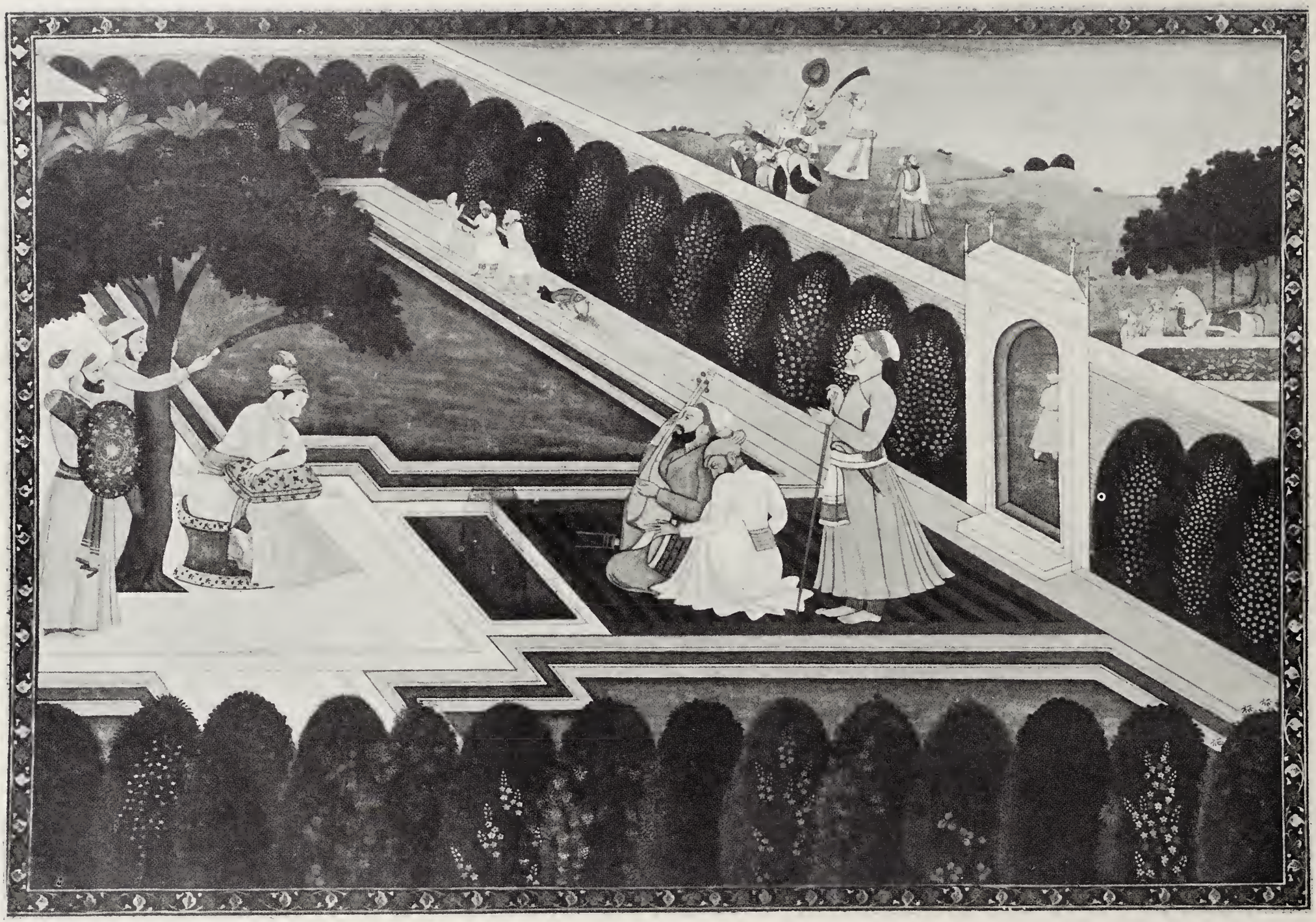


Plate 31 Nala waiting for the Swan's return



Plate 32 Kuṇḍinapura: Bhima's city

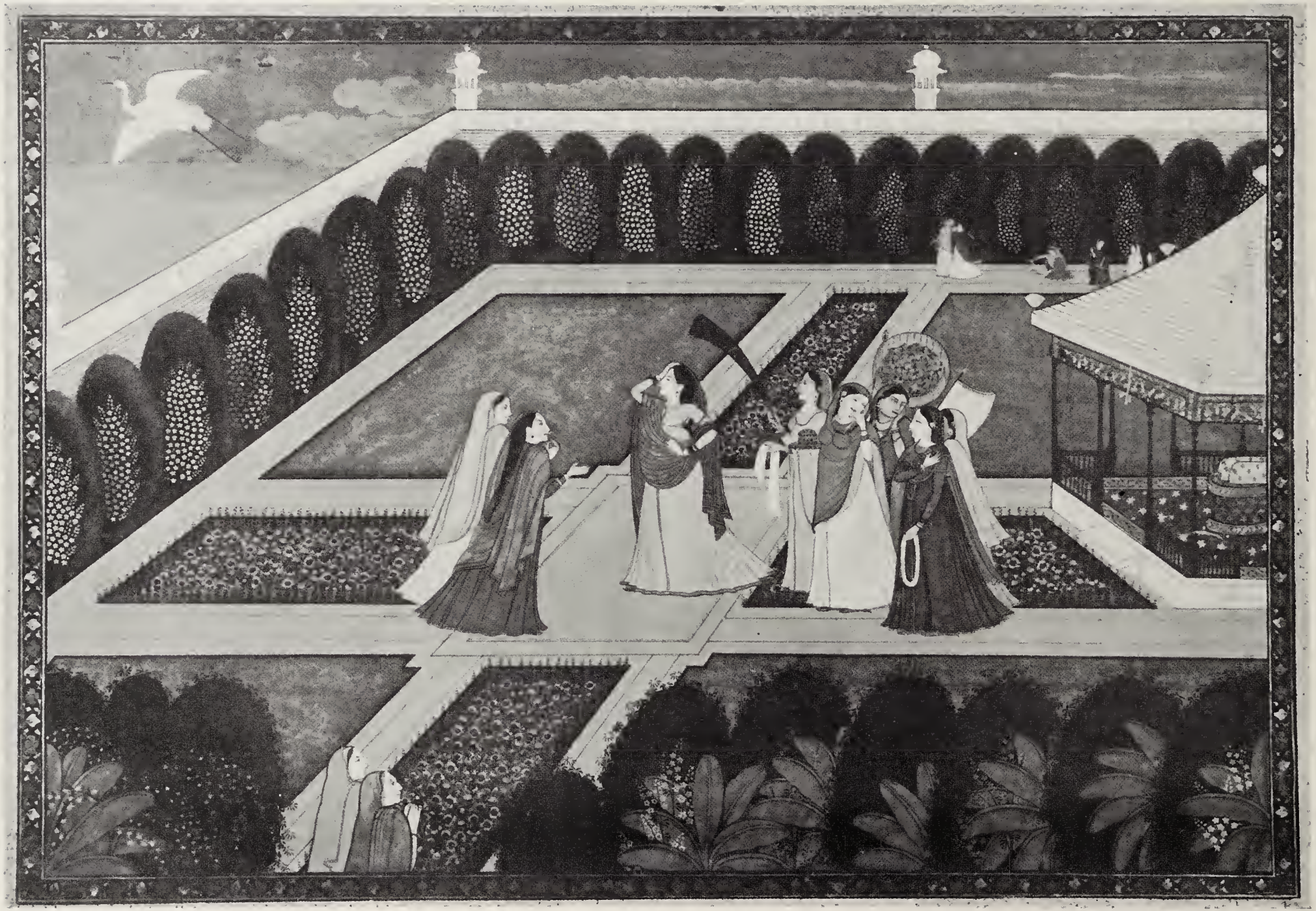


Plate 33 The Swan flies back

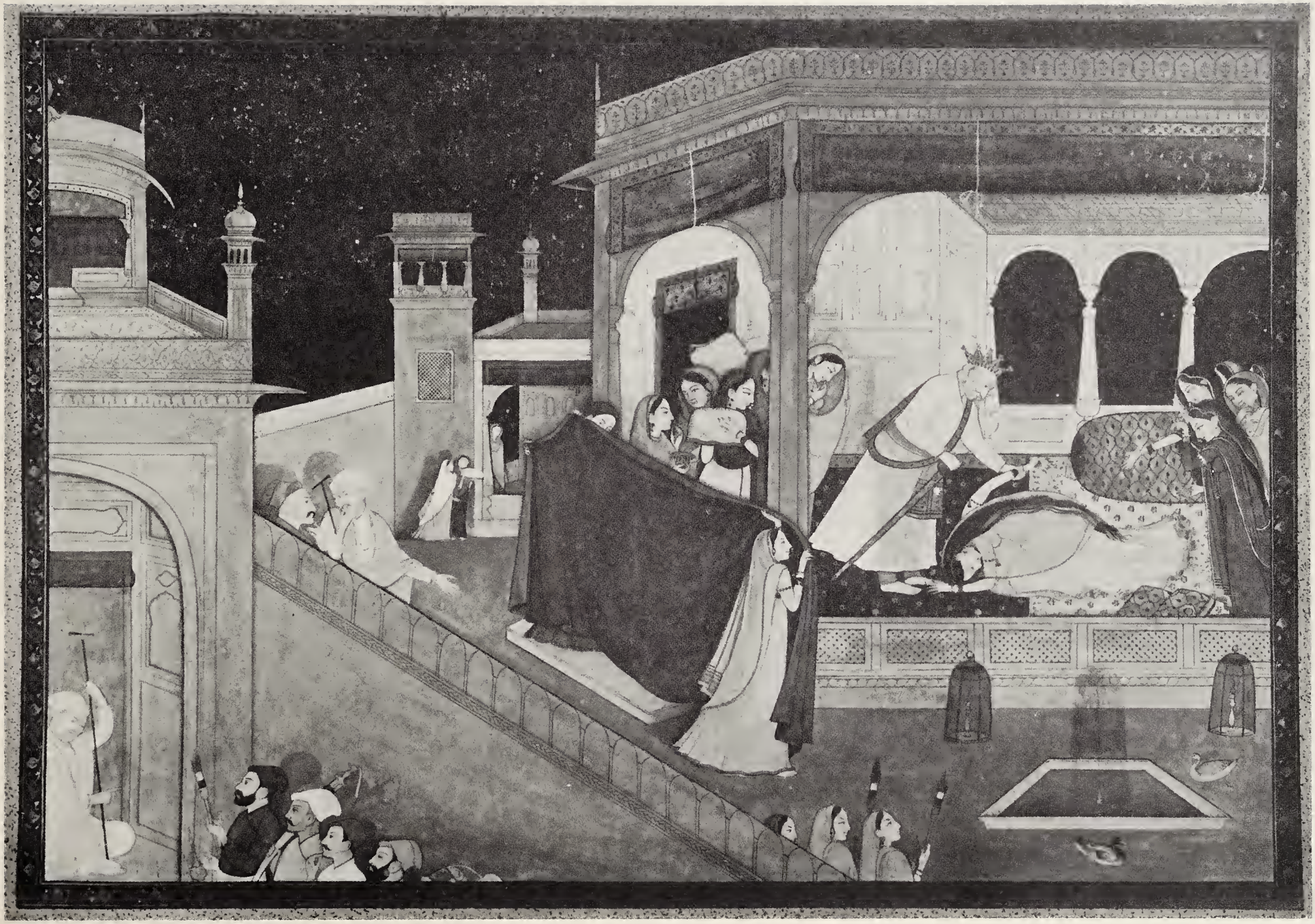


Plate 34 King Bhima speaks to Damayanti



Plate 35 Damayanti's svayamvara is announced



Plate 36 Nārada taking leave of Indra



Plate 37 Nala sets off towards Kuṇḍinapura

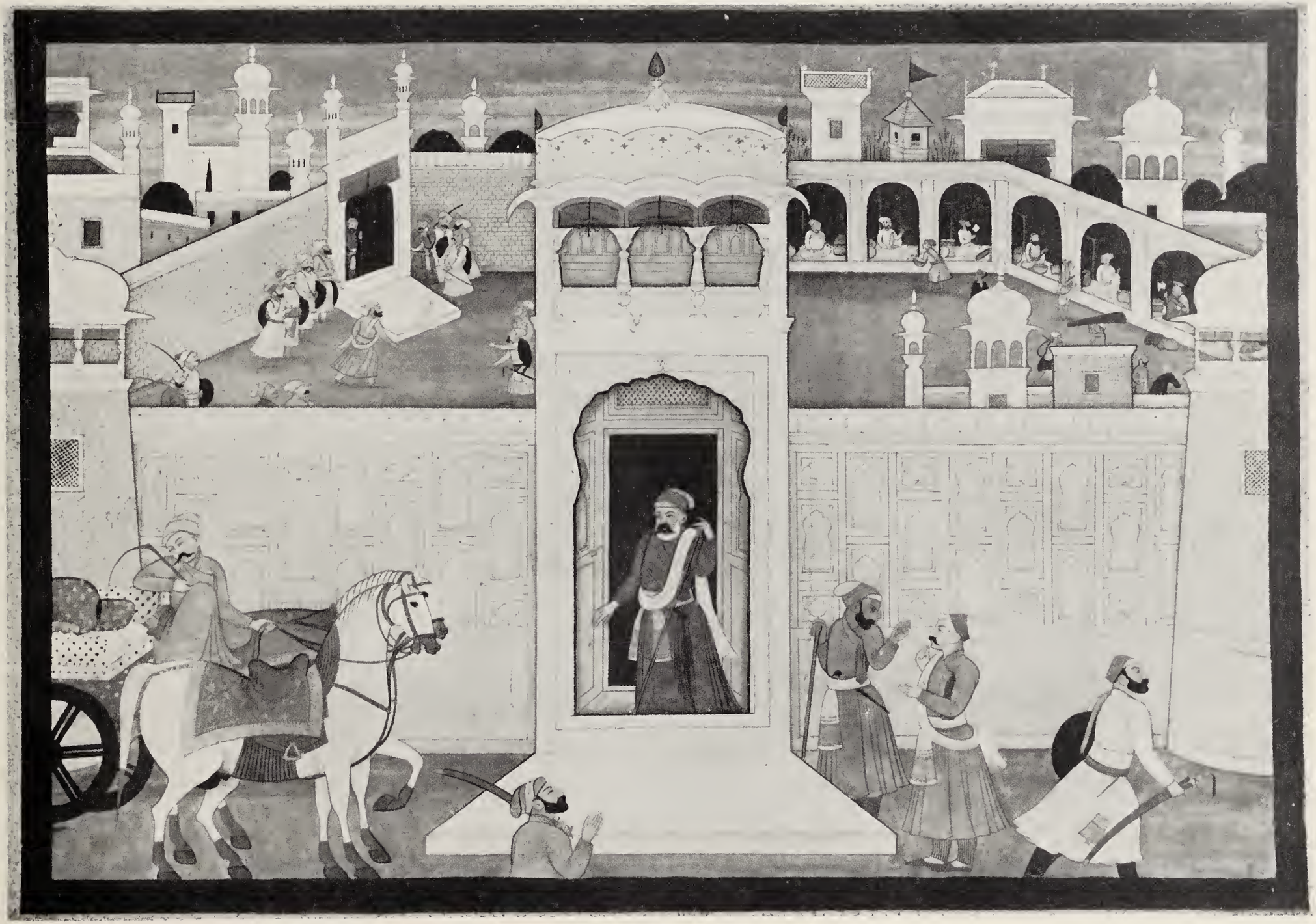


Plate 38 Nala enters Bhima's palace in invisible form

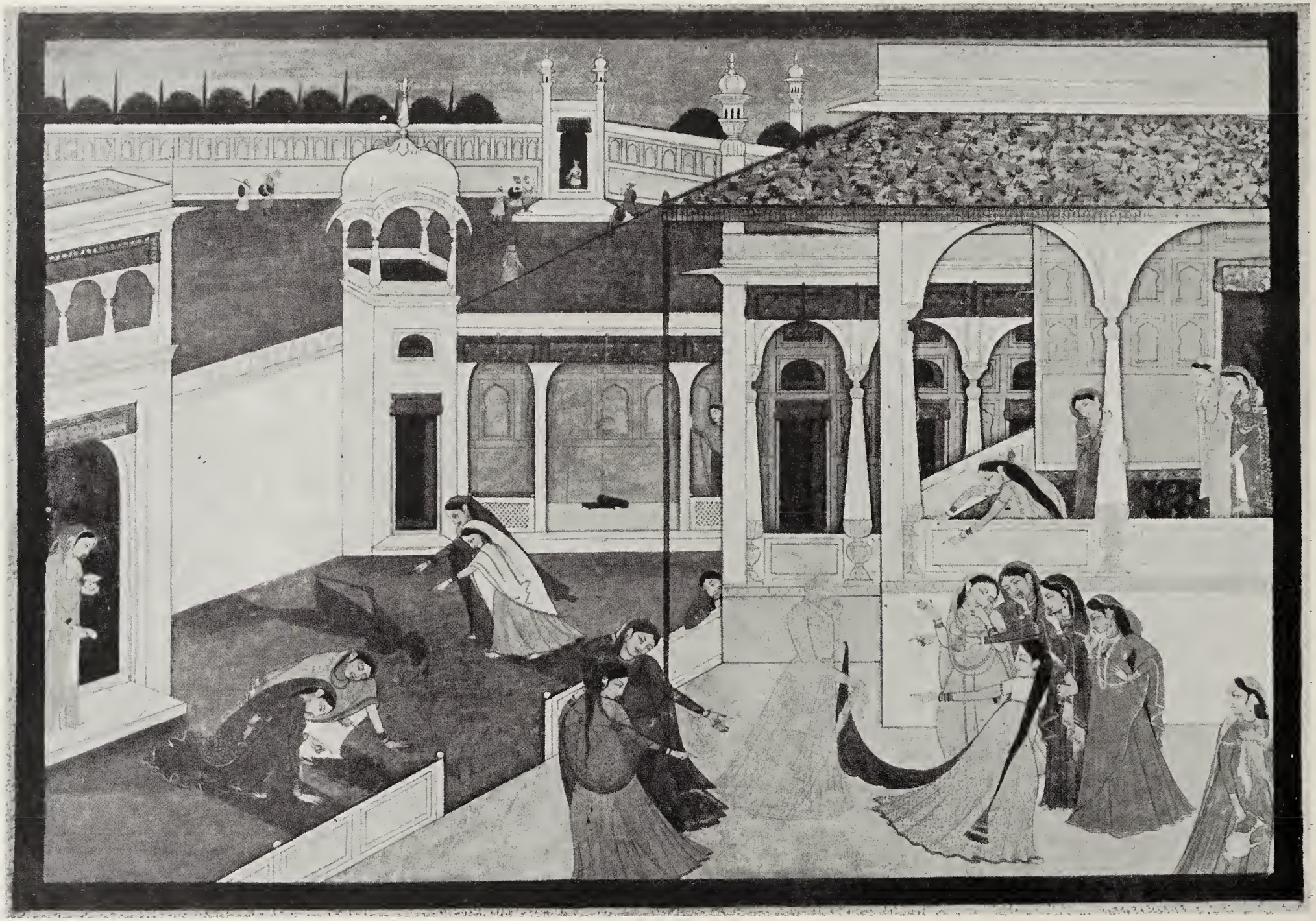


Plate 39 The confusion in the palace

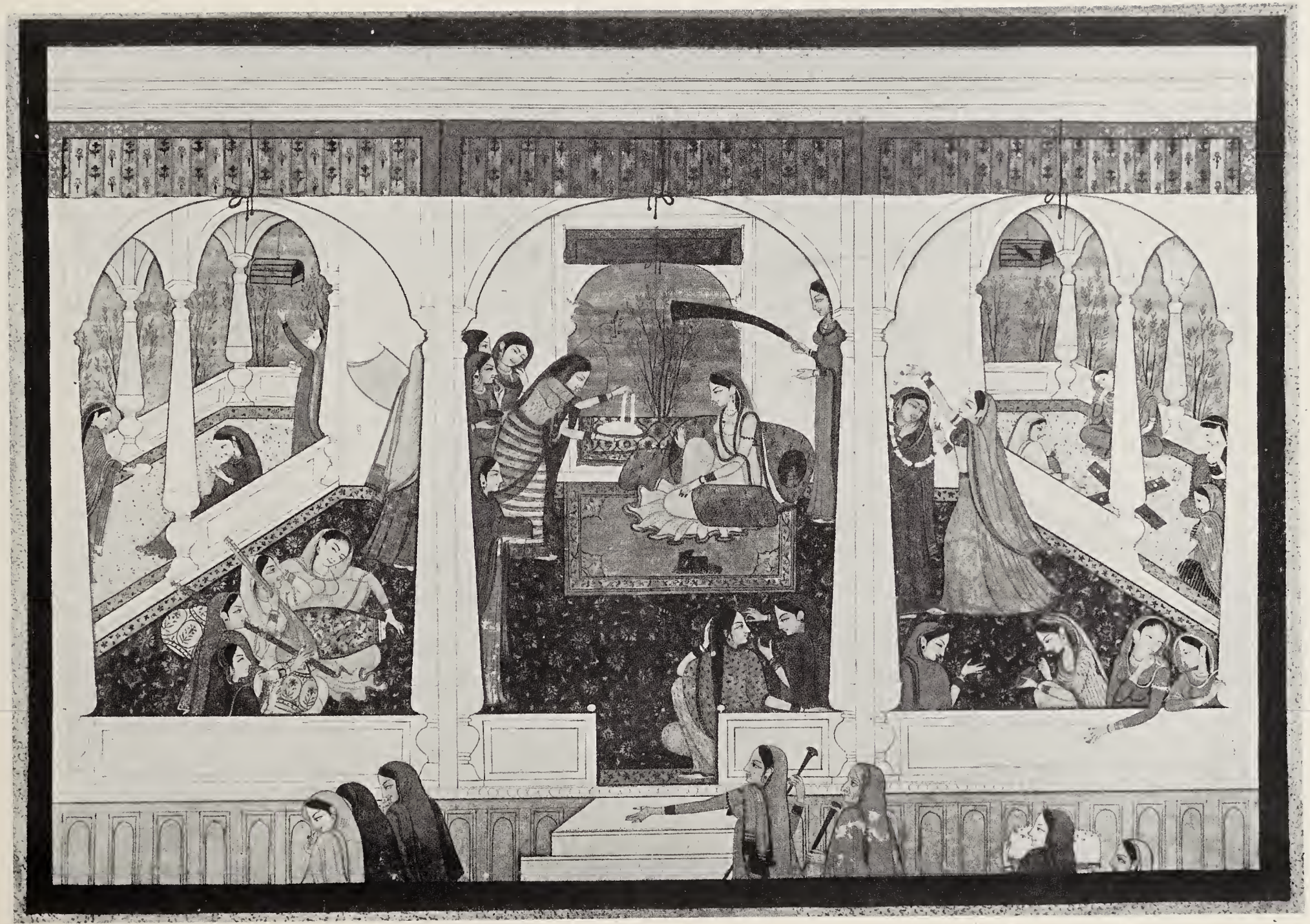


Plate 40 Indra's messenger in Damayanti's chambers



Plate 41 The conversation of Nala and Damayanti: ii

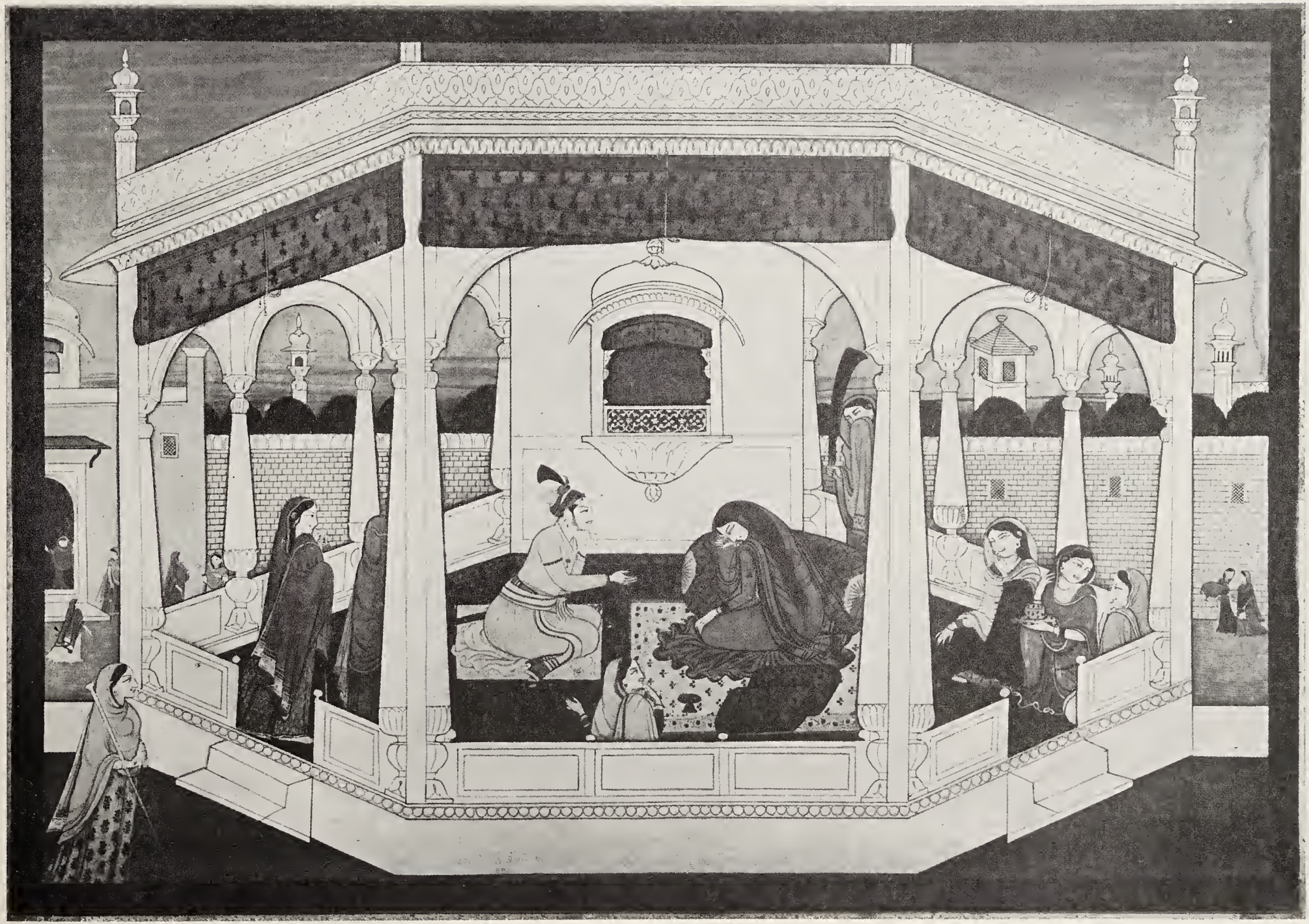


Plate 42 The conversation of Nala and Damayanti: iii

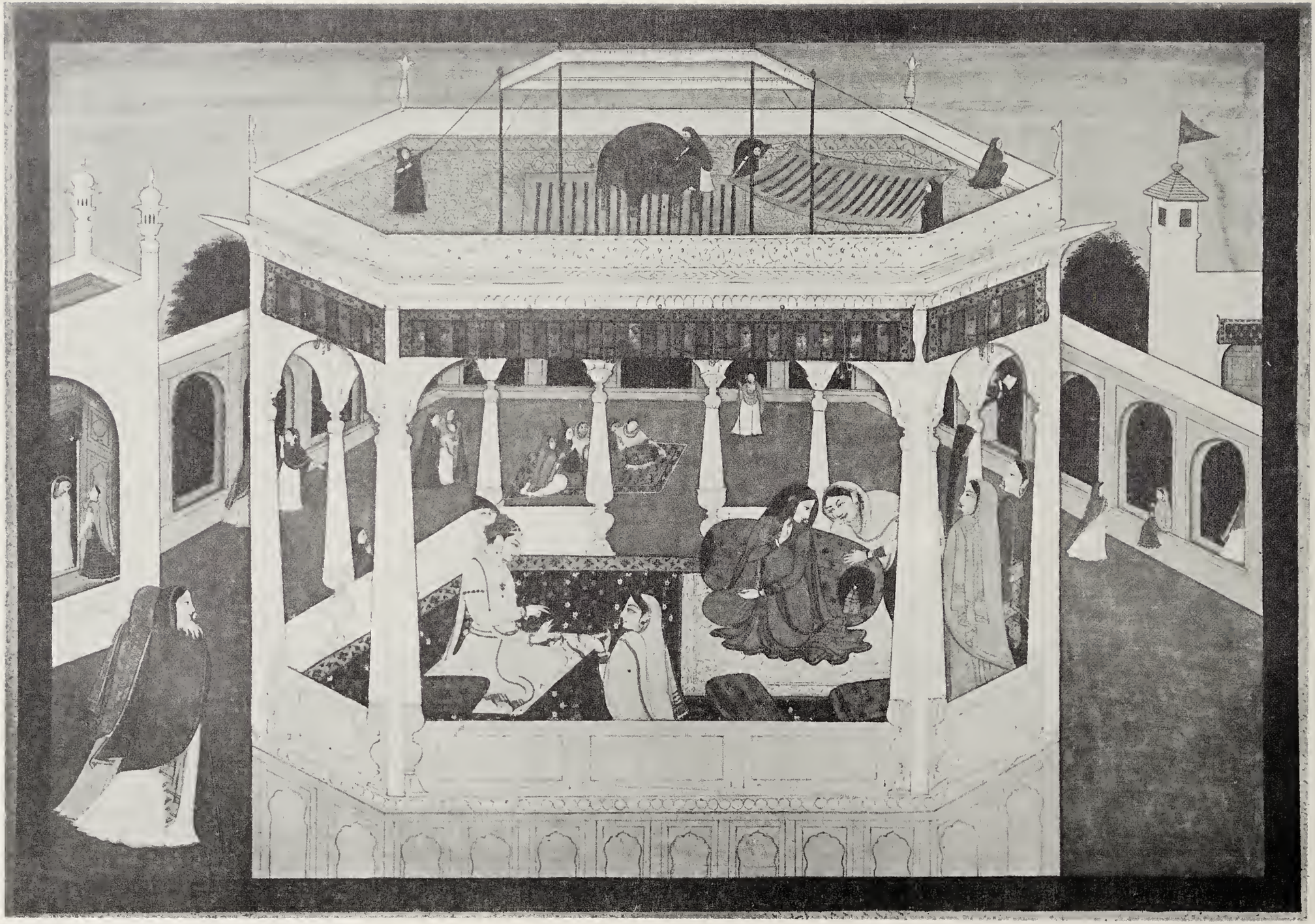


Plate 43 The conversation of Nala and Damayanti: iv

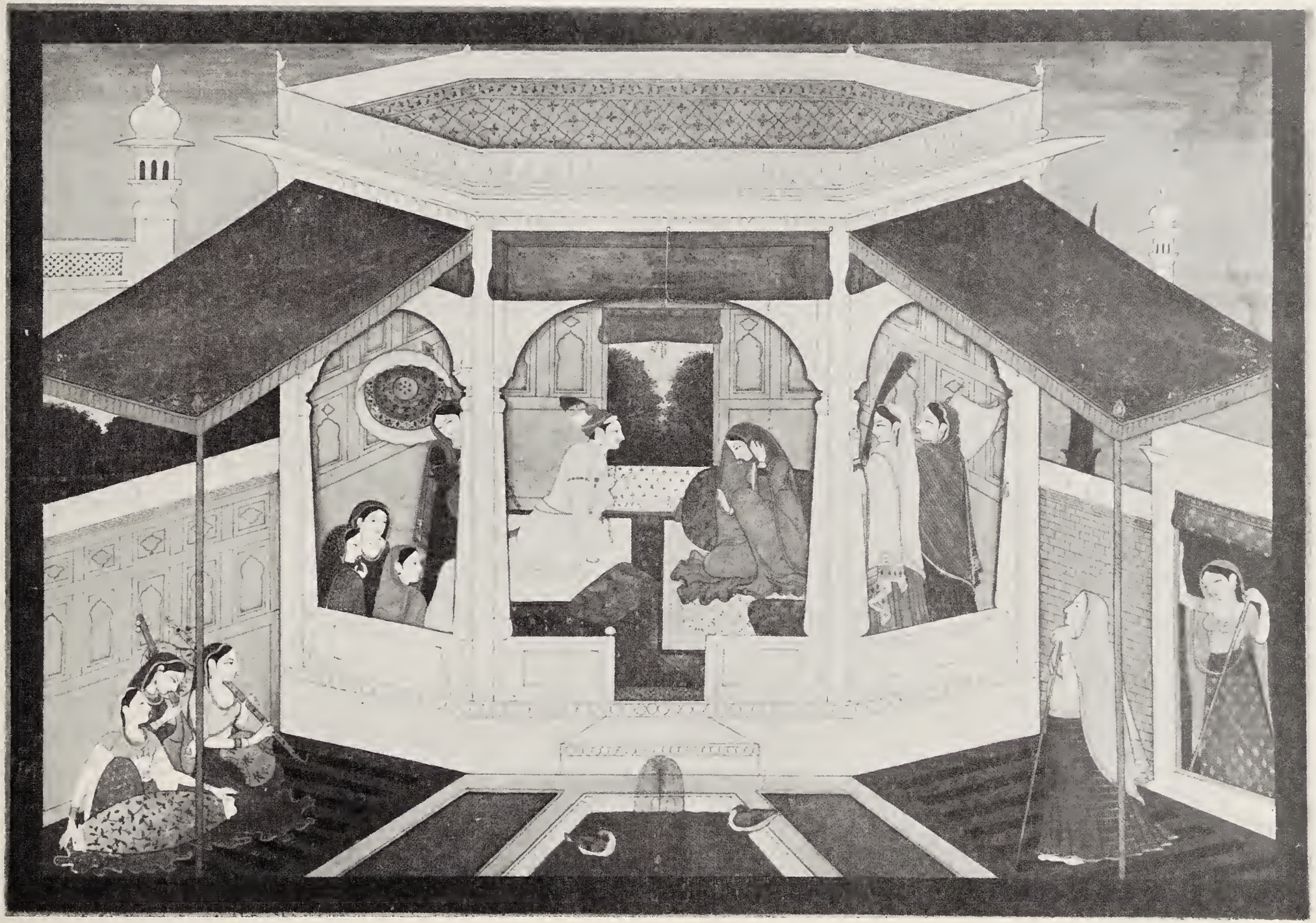


Plate 44 The conversation of Nala and Damayanti:v

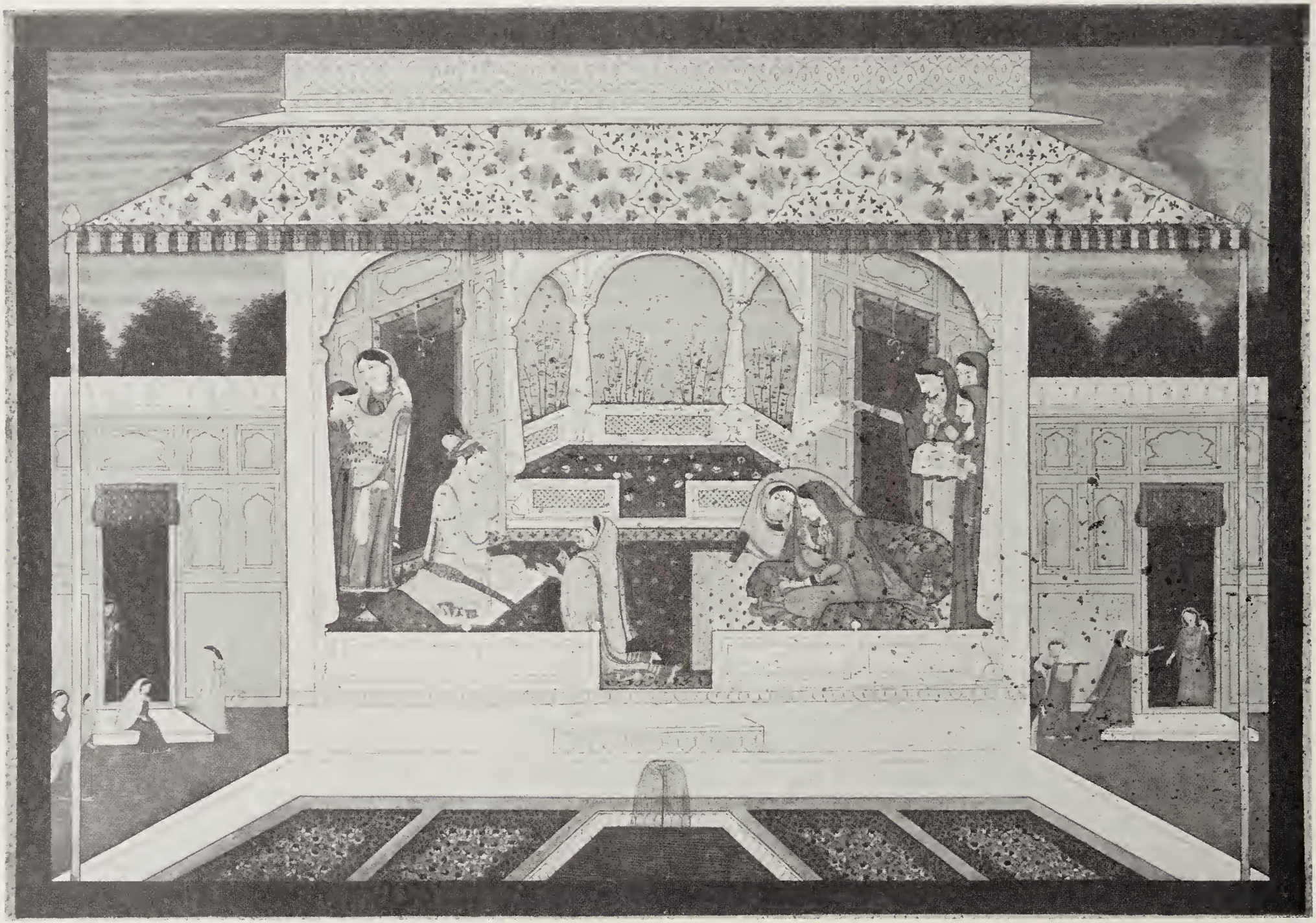


Plate 45 The conversation of Nala and Damayanti: vi

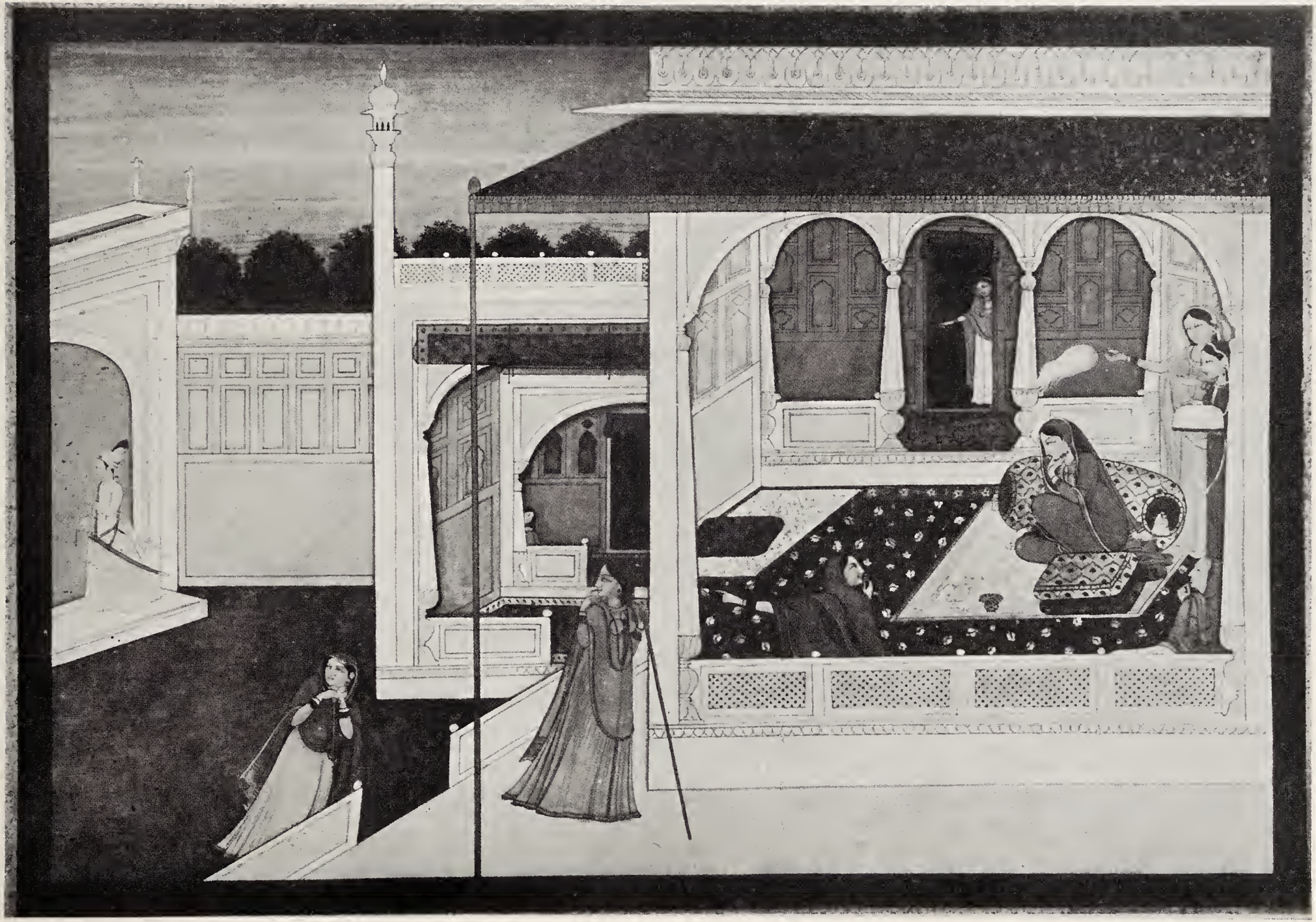


Plate 46 Nala takes leave of Damayanti

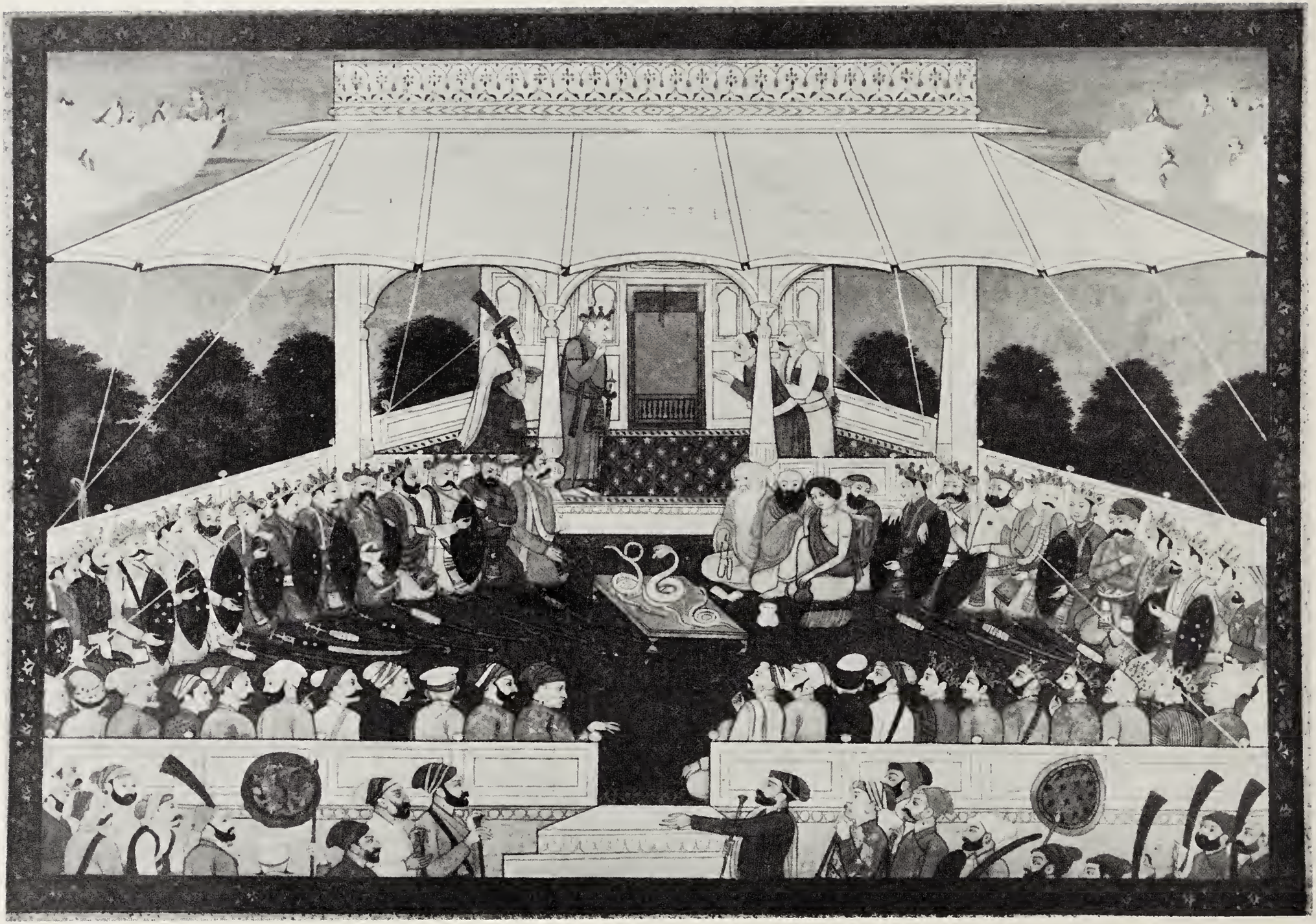


Plate 47 The assemblage of princes

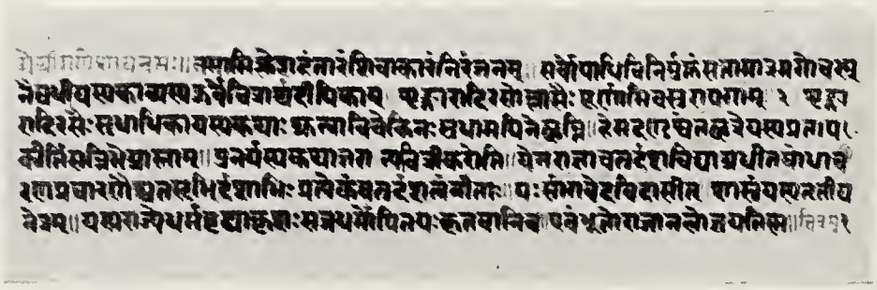
CONCORDANCE

It has not been possible to retain the sequence of paintings in the Karan Singh Collection in the plates because only selected paintings are reproduced here in colour, the remaining being in black and white. For following the story, the following concordance will be of help.

Sequence in set	Plate No.	Sequence in set	Plate No.	Sequence in set	Plate No.	Sequence in set	Plate No.
1	1	13	31	25	36	37	41
2	2	14	32	26	15	38	42
3	3	15	8	27	16	39	43
4	4	16	33	28	17	40	44
5	26	17	9	29	37	41	45
6	27	18	10	30	38	42	22
7	28	19	11	31	18	43	46
8	5	20	12	32	39	44	23
9	29	21	13	33	19	45	24
10	6	22	34	34	40	46	25
11	7	23	35	35	20	47	47
12	30	24	14	36	21		

TRANSLATIONS

What follows is a more or less free translation in English of the Sanskrit text which appears on the protective flap of the paintings in the Karan Singh collection. The text, designated as *Citrārthadīpikā,* opens with a few verses but is in prose for the most part. The effort in it is to interpret the difficult verses of the *Naiṣadhacarita* and to condense them. The result is that it often sounds stilted, a blemish which it has been our effort to avoid in the English translation as best as we could. This translation, read continuously, offers at least a gist of the story that forms the theme of these paintings.



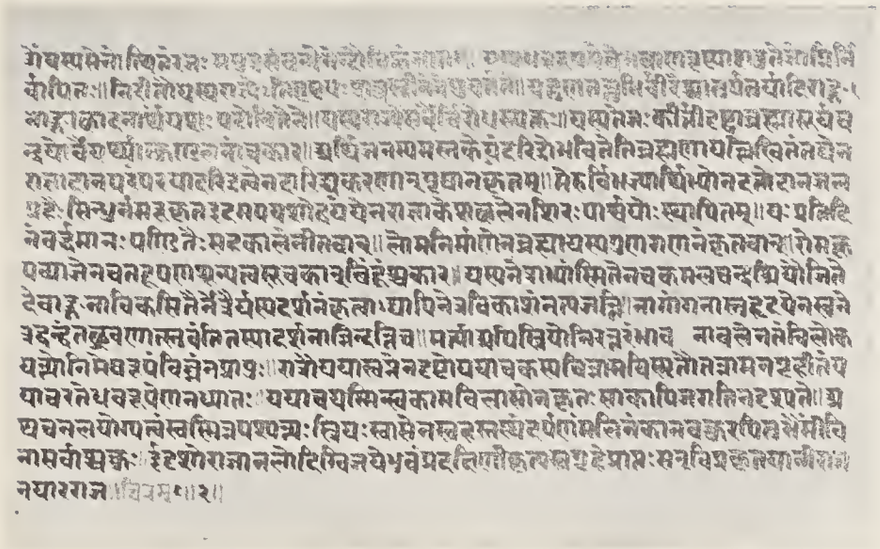
PAINTING I

Aum. Salutation to *Gaṇeśa*. I bow to the destroyer of affliction, who is of auspicious appearance, who is unstained, free from all attributes, and is a mere abstraction, beyond the cognizance of senses.

2. I am writing the *Citrārthadīpikā* (a commentary, lit. "a lamp for interpreting the meaning of" the illustrations) of the *Naiṣadhīya*. Like the celestial river (*Gaṅgā*), it is full of the delights of the sentiments of love, etc.

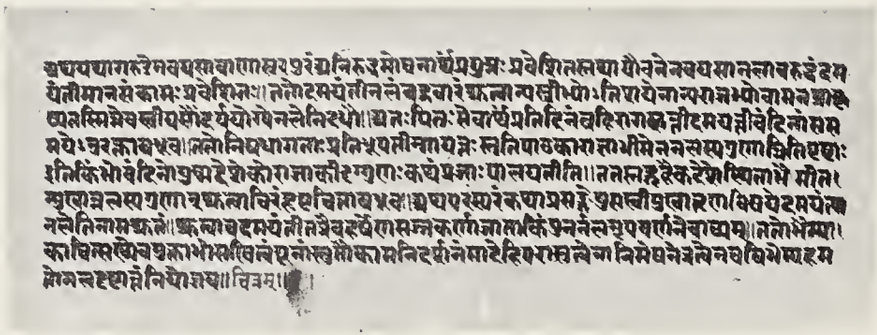
3. Having heard of whose narrative which excels ambrosia on account of the flavour of its *rasas*, the connoisseurs show scant regard even for nectar.

Whose golden sceptre and white parasol were appropriate to his splendour and fame, and whose narrative sanctifies the world; that king by whom each of the fourteen sciences was made fourfold by means of the four stages, *viz.,* study, comprehension, practice and propagation; who was conversant with the Vedas together with the (six) auxiliary branches of learning; whose third eye was the sacred lore: in whose realm, vice, having been reduced to the point of emaciation by the growth of virtue, looked as if he had practised excruciating penance. Such was king Nala. Hail to him.



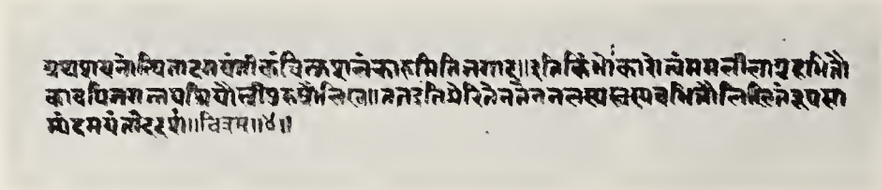
PAINTING II

Aum. The dust raised by his (Nala's) army turned into the (solid) spot in the moon that is (otherwise) an ocean (of nectar). The enemies' fire of valour was extinguished by the rain of arrows from his cloud-like bow. In his kingdom free from *itis* (calamities), excess of rain (in the form of tears) found refuge in the eyes of his enemies' widows. His brave men wove the cloth of his fame with the shuttle of their skill using his virtues as yarn, for being worn by the maidens of the sky. All beings gave up their hostilities in his kingdom. The Creator seeing his might and valour drew a circle (*i.e.* halo) round the sun and the moon as a mark of their inadequacy as standards of might and fame. The words 'this person will be poor' as inscribed on the forehead of the needy by the Creator were rendered meaningful by making poverty itself poor with his munificence. Only two disreputable acts were resting on his head in the form of the two parted plaits of hair: one that he did not distribute the Mount Meru of gold among the needy; and, second, that he did not dry up the ocean turning it into a desert by pouring out its water in making gifts to suppliants. Everyday he passed his time in the company of the learned. The Creator reckoned his merits with the number of the hair on his body and through pores he indicated the absence of demerits. The smile of his eyes had vanquished the beauty of the moon and that of lotuses. The maidens of heaven drinking him in with their eyes wide open would not close them. The mistresses of the Nāgas who hear with their eyes bless them (their eyes) as they listen to his virtues, but curse them as they do not see him. The women of the earth seeing him with their mind's eyes through constant contemplation could not afford to wink for fear of losing his vision. Which woman was there on earth that did not see him in her dreams; who was it that did not utter his name inadvertently; which woman did not arouse her passionate feeling during dalliance in sleep by thinking of her husband as Nala? With the sole exception of Damayantī what woman did not darken the mirror in her hand with sighs seeing in it that her beauty was unequal to that of Nala? Such was Nala who, having gone around the earth with a view to conquer it, was honoured by *Brāhmaṇas* with 'the ceremony of circular waving of lights' on his successful return home. Painting 2.



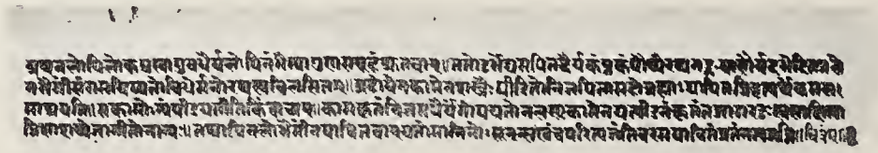
PAINTING III

Now, just as *Garuḍa* stealthily introduced Pradyumna (incarnation of Cupid) into the fire-girt city of Bāṇāsura, for the liberation of Aniruddha, so did youth introduce Cupid into the Nala-ridden heart of Damayantī. Then, Damayantī, having heard about Nala on many occasions from other women, and having completely withdrawn her mind from other kings, fixed it upon Nala who alone was worthy of her beauty. Accordingly, while coming out everyday to pay respects to her father, she was much interested in the recitals of the bards. Once the panegyrists hailing from *Niṣadha* were questioned thus about Nala's virtues by king *Bhīma*: "Tell me, O bards! Who is the king in your country? What are his merits and how does he rule over his subjects?" Damayantī, standing in a part of the chamber, felt thrilled to hear from the bards the merits of Nala. If the women (of the palace) in the course of ordinary conversation casually mentioned even the reed, *nala* (naḍa) her ears stood up at once with rapture; what would have been her joy now that she heard the merits of Nala, the king? Then the daughter of king Bhīma addressed one of her female friends thus: "Dear friend, while praising traits of young men please do not cite the example of Cupid. I am terribly afraid of him, for he is beyond existence, and has unblinking eyes. Think now of Nala as an ideal." Painting 3.



PAINTING IV

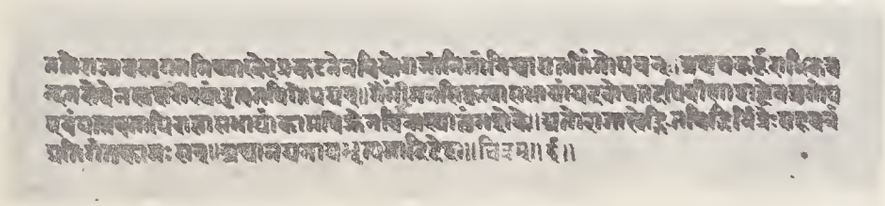
Once, waking up from sleep, Damayantī spoke thus to a skilled artist: "Paint on the wall of my pleasure-chamber the likeness of a lover and his beloved of unsurpassing beauty." Then in the couple of this description painted by the artist on the wall, Damayantī saw the exact likeness of Nala and herself, Painting 4.



PAINTING V

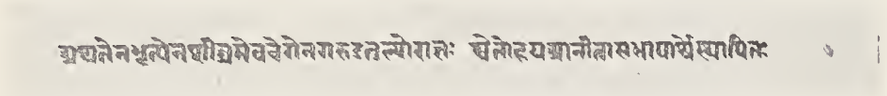
In course of time, Nala too heard of the countless virtues of Bhīma's daughter from the mouth of the people—virtues which caused the composure of the youth to disappear. That

Cupid was able to pierce the armour of his impenetrable fortitude, even with his flowered arrows, was the result of the wish of Destiny which desired to unite the daughter of Bhīma's with Nala. Oh! Cupid is such that tormented by his darts even his own grandfather, Brahmā, even today seeks shelter as it were in the lotus to escape them. Is it any wonder then that Cupid should torment someone else too? The torment caused by Cupid to Nala, who endeavoured to hide this turmoil, was known only to the night and the bed who witnessed his distress from keeping awake. Even then, however, Nala did not beg for the hand of the daughter of Bhīma, because those who are possessed of self-respect would part with their life and comfort rather than give up their vow of never stooping to ask for a favour. Painting 5.



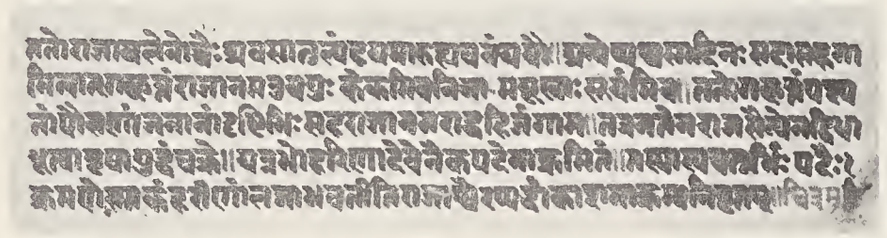
PAINTING VI

The King concealed the series of sighs born of separation by displaying false sadness arising from some small thing or the other; he even camouflaged his pallor by attributing it to the excess of camphor in the sandal-paste (that he applied). Absorbed in the thoughts of Bhīma's daughter, what he uttered in the assembled court was lost in the notes of the lute. Thus, try as he would, the King was unable even to sit in assembly, without betraying the longings of love. Therefore, being desirous of going to a grove in the company of friends who could know his mind, he ordered the servant to fetch his horse. Painting 6.



PAINTING VII

So, that servant, having instantly brought the King's white horse which was equal to Garuḍa in speed, stationed it near the assembly hall. Painting 7.

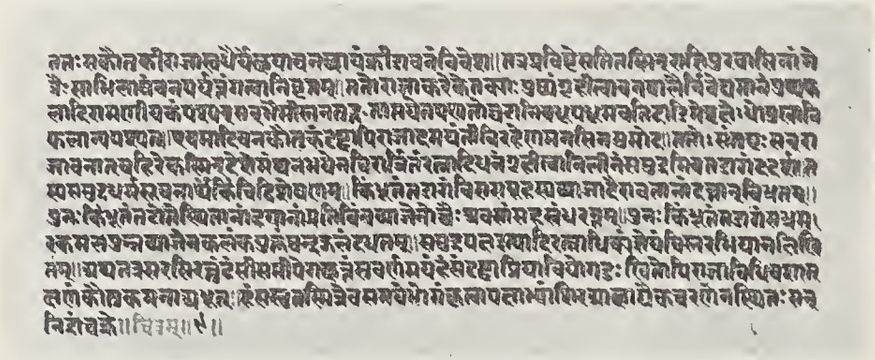


PAINTING VIII

Then the King, having mounted with vigour that horse which was equal to Uccaiḥśravas (the mount of Indra) went to the grove. Other horsemen, too, now followed the King who was setting forth, as they had always done, just as the sun is followed by his own rays.

Then the King went out of the city to the accompaniment of the gaze of the citizens who were watching his departure. The royal army which had gone there, dividing

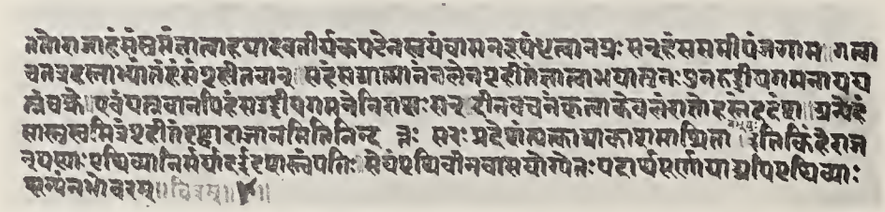
itself into two parts, fought a mock battle. The royal horses, feeling that it would be cause for shame for them to traverse that same sky with their four feet which Viṣṇu (Trivikrama) had done with one footstep, turned back, after having traversed only half the sky. Painting 8.



PAINTING IX

Then that pleasure-loving monarch, wishing to regain his composure and seeking recreation, entered the thickly shaded pleasure garden. After the King had entered, the eyes of the citizens, having expectantly gone up to the pleasure-grove, turned back. Then the King, holding a *Ketakī* flower in his hand, and fascinated by the beauty of the flowers and fruits which were being pointed out to him by the gardeners, saw on a pomegranate tree inhaling fumes of incense those pitcher-shaped fruits hanging with faces turned downwards, as if (like anchorites) they were performing penance in order to attain the heightened fullness of Damayantī's breasts. Even after having seen the pleasurable sights of the grove, the King, on account of his separation from Damayantī, did not feel real joy at heart. Then, disconsolate, the King saw in a spot outside the pleasure-grove, a tank which was like the sea hiding there with its long-accumulated wealth of jewels for fear of being churned. It had some attributes which made it resemble the sea. What kind of a tank was it? A tank which held in the form of lotus stalks the tusks of the heavenly elephants (*Airāvatas*). It contained a thousand *Uccaihśravas* (Indra's horse) in the form of the reflection of the royal horses standing by its sides. Again, it was a tank that bore a host of blemished moons in the guise of lotus leaves with large black bees resting on them. This tank also had other forms of *ratnas,* but they are not mentioned here for want of space.

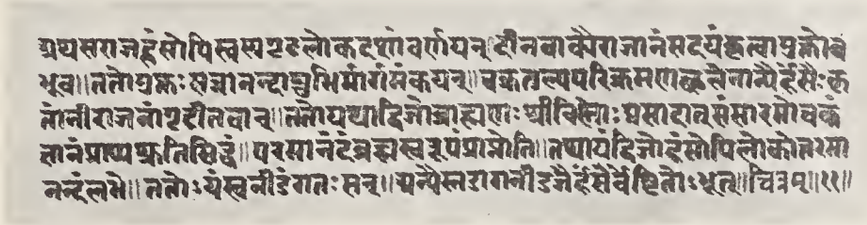
Now, by this tank Nala saw a golden swan moving amorously towards its mate and the King, though tormented by separation from his beloved, became for a moment absorbed in this sight, filled with curiosity. And the swan at that very moment, having enjoyed sexual pleasure, and having nestled its head in its wings, went to sleep standing on one leg. Painting 9.



PAINTING X

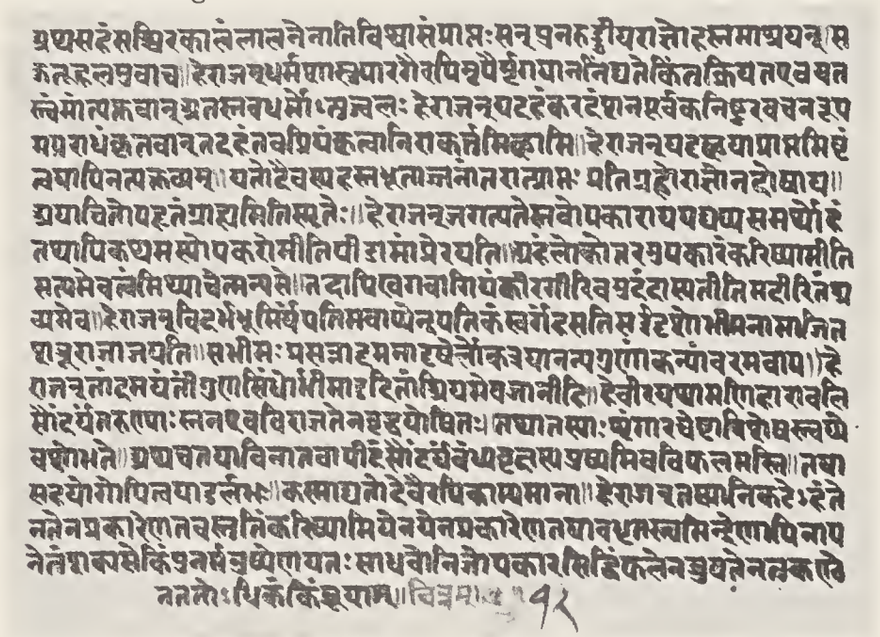
Knowing that the swan was asleep, the King got down from his horse and artfully assuming a dwarfish form and

bending low, crept close to the swan and caught hold of it with his hands. That swan, realizing that it was caught by Nala, and stricken by fear, made desperate efforts again and again to fly away. When with all his efforts the swan did not succeed, it uttered a piteous cry in despair, and pecked the King on his hand. The other swans, seeing their friend captured, promptly left the region of the tank and flew into the sky, reviling the King thus: "This earth, O King! of which you are the unprincipled lord is surely not fit for residence. Even the empty spaces of the sky are to be preferred to this earth which is replete with material goods." Painting 10.



PAINTING XI

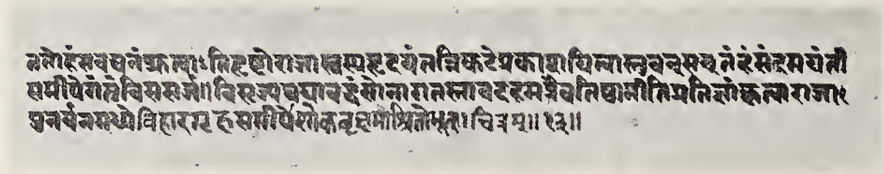
But then that royal swan secured his release himself by narrating to the king the (object) condition of his household and filling the king with compassion through his piteous utterances. Upon his release, as he left a trail of tears of joy along his path, the other swans went around him in a circle as if they were according him the honour of welcome with the circular waving of lights. Then, like a twice-born *Brāhmaṇa* who obtains through the favour of *Viṣṇu* the sacred knowledge which brings about release from (the bondage of) the world (and thus) obtains the highest bliss of identity with the Supreme Spirit, this swan, too, obtained heavenly joy. Having gone to his nest, he then became surrounded by fellow-swans and other birds of the tank. Painting 11.



PAINTING XII

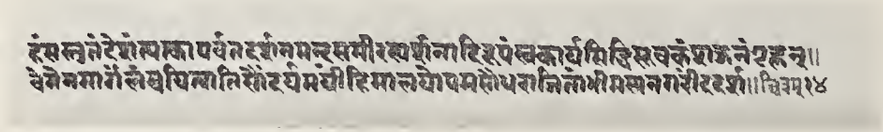
Then, that swan, having acquired great trust in the king who had gently been patting him, came flying again and resting on the king's hand, amazingly began speaking. "O King! hunting is not forbidden even to such kings as have mastered the sacred scriptures on *dharma*. Therefore my release by you is evidence of your extraordinary piety. O King! the wrong that I have done to you in the form of abusive words preceded by the pecking of your hand I want to atone for, by doing you a good turn. O King! even you

should not spurn a gift that comes unasked. A return favour received from another person who is virtually an agent of Fate, does not bring blame even to the king, for as the law-books say: 'that which is offered without asking, should be accepted.' O King! though I am incapable of doing a favour to you who is the lord of the world, I long so much to do this. That I shall do you an unusual favour is verily a truth, although you might think differently. If nothing else, this utterance from a bird will yield pleasure like the voice of a parrot does, and must be heard. O King! the land of Vidarbha mocks at heaven which has Indra as its lord, for it is blessed with having King Bhīma, the subduer of enemies, as its master. That Bhīma obtained, as a gracious boon from the sage Damana, a daughter possessed of qualities which are unique in the three worlds. O King! regard that Damayantī as Lakṣmī incarnate, emerging from that ocean of virtues (who is) Bhīma. O hero! just as the beauty of strands of jewelled necklaces shines forth only against the breasts of a youthful woman, and not on an old lady, her acute longings of love will find a fitting repository only in you. Devoid of her, this beauty of yours also is useless as the flower of a barren tree. But your union with her too is difficult of attainment, because she is coveted even by the gods. O King! I shall (however) extol your virtues before her in such diverse ways that you alone will be her idol and it would be impossible even for Indra, let alone common mortals, to supersede you. The righteous prove themselves through achievement and not with words; therefore, what more should I say? Painting 12.



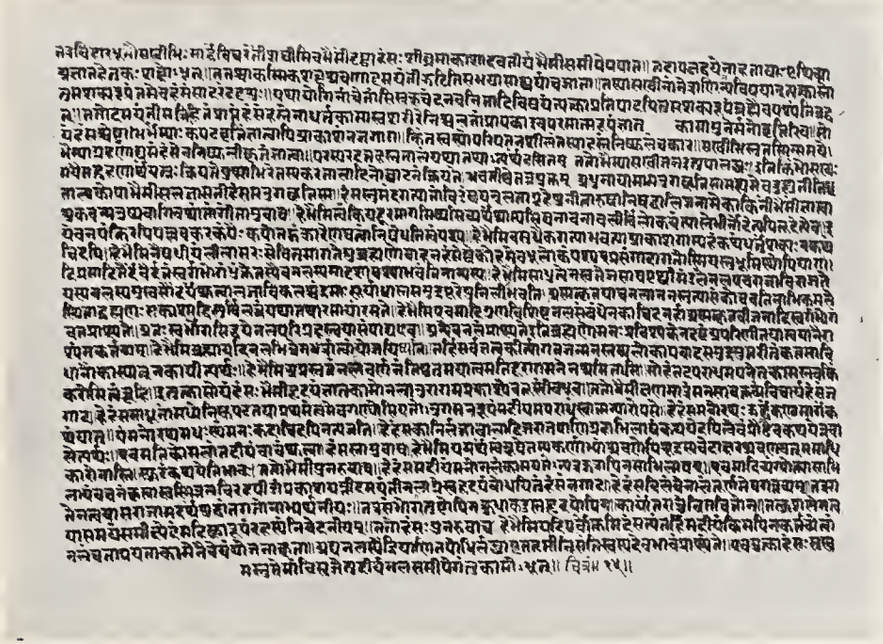
PAINTING XIII

Then, having heard the speech of the swan, the king was overjoyed. Opening his heart up to the swan and after praising him, he sent him on his way to Damayantī. Having done this, the king, resolving that as long as the swan does not come back, I shall stay at this very spot, took himself to an Aśoka tree, in the vicinity of the pleasure-chamber, in the midst of the grove. Painting 13.



PAINTING XIV

And the swan, departing from that place, and taking the sight of the mountains and the touch of the gentle breeze as good omens ensuring success, covered the distance with speed and then saw the city of Bhīma, possessed of great beauty, and glittering with white mansions resembling the (snow-clad) Himalayas. Painting 14.

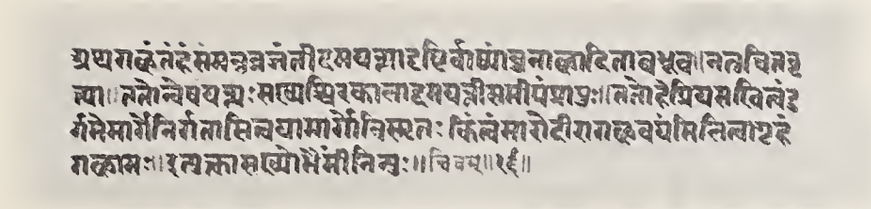


PAINTING XV

There, seeing the daughter of Bhīma, resembling the wife of Indra, and strolling in the recreation ground alongwith her female friends, the swan quickly descended from the sky and alighted close to Damayantī. Then hearing the sudden, inexplicable sound caused by the flapping of the wings of the swan, Damayantī became at once frightened and amazed. The gaze of her friends, forgetting everything else, became fixed on that swan of unsurpassed beauty alone, just as the minds of *yogīs* renouncing garlands, sandal, women and other pleasures, visualize only Brahman, whose form is incomprehensible. Then Damayantī, desirous of catching hold of the swan, which had come very close, became completely still like the mind of sages concentrating upon knowing the nature of the Supreme Being. That swan, however, aware of the deceitful ruse of the daughter of Bhīma, did not take to the sky, and only foiled her attempt to catch him. At that time, finding that the swan had foiled the efforts of Damayantī to catch him, her friends laughed merrily, and clapped their hands. Then the daughter of Bhīma chided her friends thus: "What is this, O friends, that while I am attempting to capture him, you are scaring him away by the clapping of your hands etc. This indeed is not proper. Now whosoever follows me, shall only be doing me harm." Saying this and feigning a little anger, the daughter of Bhīma, somewhat abashed, pursued the swan. The swan, imitating her slow gait, led her to the bower of creepers, and finding her alone, for she had forbidden her female-friends to follow her, spoke to the fatigued Damayantī, like a parrot gifted with human speech. "O daughter of Bhīma! how far will you follow me? You are tiring yourself in vain. Surely these stretches of dense forests should strike fear in you. See! this row of trees forbids you to follow on by waving its hands of leaves and through the cooing of the pìgeons (resting in them). O daughter of Bhīma how can I, a bird of the sky, be captured by you who can walk only on earth? It is not possible, "O daughter of Bhīma! of all the swans which are the vehicles of Brahmā (and) which had come to sport in the recreation-lake of the king of Niṣadha, only I have casually arrived here viewing this terrestrial region. Creatures of my kind become subservient only to that Nala who enjoys the pleasures of heaven, granted by the gods propitiated with (the performance of) sacrifices, not to anyone else. O daughter of Bhīma! by virtue of his goodness and majesty, Nala alone shines forth as a king in the

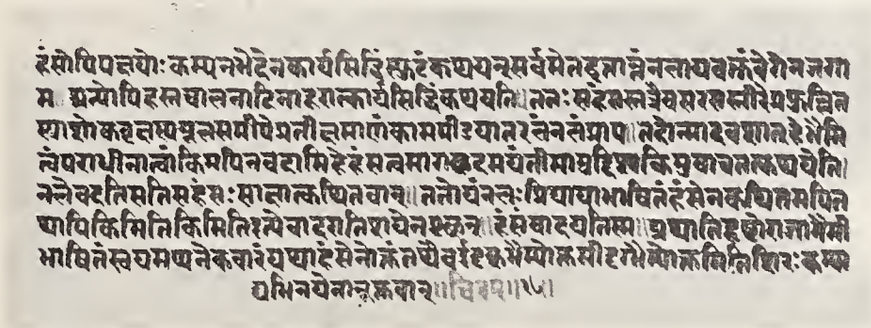
terrestrial sphere. Having heard of the beauty of Nala, the moon tormented by shame, hides itself sometimes in the sun, in the clouds, and in the tides of the ocean at the time of setting. Viṣṇu sports with Lakṣmī unabashed (even) in the proximity of Brahmā who resides in the navel-lotus (of Viṣṇu) that has shrunk with shame on hearing the praise of Nala's beauty as described by me. O daughter of Bhīma! what a pity that some unworthy woman might obtain the heavenly pleasure of being fanned (by our wings) on being married to Nala who is distinguished by qualities like these: it is you who should be entitled to these divine pleasures by forming a matrimonial alliance with Nala. Who knows the inscrutable mind of Brahmā: you should not presume that someone else shall obtain the hand of Nala! You, who are unmarried, should not give up hope. O daughter of Bhīma! if Brahmā should unite you with a husband other than Nala, then what kind of boat shall avail to ferry him, whose entire life has been lived with the reputation of being omniscient, across the ocean of public reproach? (None whatever: that is the implication). O daughter of Bhīma! enough of this description of Nala. You have come far in following me and it is I who have caused you such fatigue. Therefore, tell me what I can do for you, since I wish to atone for that wrong."

Having said this, that swan, wishing to know the mind of the daughter of Bhīma, and without revealing his attachment to Nala, fell silent. Then, the daughter of Bhīma, having for a moment pondered over what to say, addressed the swan thus: "O swan! amongst the good, you ought to be counted first for the purity of your heart, for you are making yourself responsible for my fault in pursuing you. O swan! how can the heart's desire be expressed through the choked passage of the throat? The wish, which lies beneath the mind, is never released. O swan! which shameless maiden will articulate her heart's desire to obtain the hand of the moon? Only a mature woman might speak of that, not a young maiden." Having heard these tender words of hers, the swan spoke to her: "O daughter of Bhīma! the intent you are speaking of, I do not even have the capacity to comprehend, just like the Śūdra has none to taking in the words of the Veda." By saying this, the swan was urging her to speak out her mind more openly. Then the daughter of Bhīma spoke again. "My heart longs for Nala, O swan! No other thought holds it." By utterances of implied meanings like this, and having spoken words full of longing, Damayantī, tormented by pain of separation from Nala told the swan to convey her heart's desire to Nala. "O swan, do not now tarry. Start at once. Having reached here, do not plead before the king, when he is in the harem, nor when he is satiated with sexual enjoyment, nor when his heart is tainted with anger, nor when his mind is occupied by some other business. So, adept as you are, finding the (opportune) moment, convey to him this secret that is my love." Then the swan spoke again, "O daughter of Bhīma! if what you have said before is true, then there is nothing left to be done by me. This plan has been formulated by Cupid himself, who has tormented you as well as Nala. To-day, Nala's sensory organs which are filled with the nectar obtained through austerities, will attain divine status." Having spoken thus, the swan, uttering (the words), 'may happiness be yours, grant me leave' became desirous of repairing to Nala's presence. Painting 15.



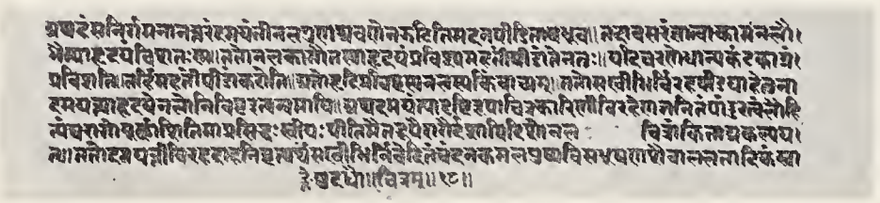
PAINTING XVI

Then, Damayantī's eyes, following the flight of the departing swan, became clouded with tears, but her mind remained clear. Meanwhile, her friends who had been looking for her for long found her. Addressing her, they said: "O dear friend! you had gone out on a path difficult to traverse. Did you lose your way? Don't weep. Come on. We shall go home together." Saying this, they took the daughter of Bhīma home. Painting 16.



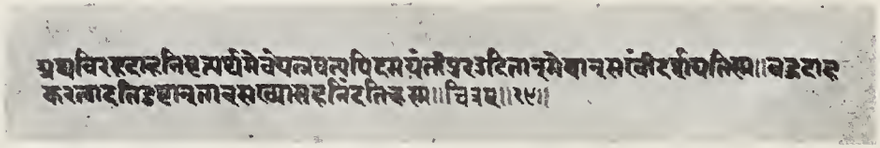
PAINTING XVII

The swan, too, manifestly indicating the success of his mission by a peculiar mode of flapping his wings, flew swiftly in order to communicate the tidings to Nala, just like a person communicates the success of the mission from a distance through gestures of hand etc. Then that swan, there on the bank of that very pond, found Nala, restless on account of the torment of love, and waiting at the foot of an Aśoka tree in bloom. Nala, agitated by the intensity of his passions, was prattling out aloud: "O Bhīma's daughter! you are not master of yourself, so I shall not say anything to you. O swan! you come here. Tell me what Damayantī has said concerning me." While Nala was thus musing, the swan actually appeared on the scene and spoke to him. Then, even though the swan had narrated at length what his beloved had said, Nala, out of excessive concern, kept on asking the swan: "What did she say? What did she say?" Afterwards the king, feeling exceedingly happy, repeated to himself many a time, together with gesticulations such as the shaking of the head, the utterances of Bhīma's daughter as reported by the swan, (saying): 'Thus spoke Bhīma's daughter; this it was that Bhīma's daughter said', etc. Painting 17.



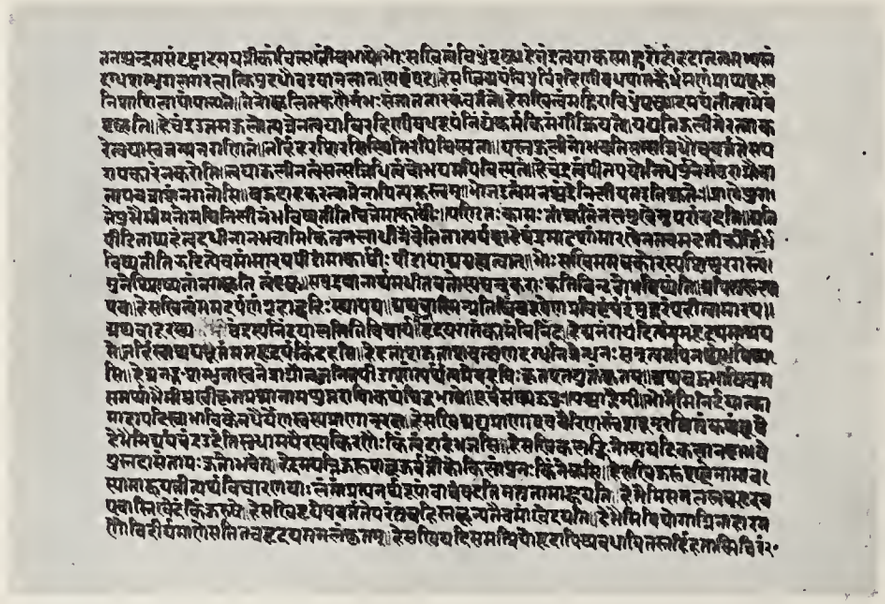
PAINTING XVIII

Now, after the departure of the swan, Damayantī became suddenly tormented by Cupid, having heard of the virtues of Nala. Then, finding an opportune moment, Cupid and Nala together entered the heart of Bhīma's daughter causing her great suffering. When even the sharp tip of a grain pricking a foot causes great pain, one can imagine the suffering caused by the entry of a reed (Nala) in the heart. The friends of Damayantī seeing the suffering caused by separation, guessed that Nala had taken up abode in Damayantī's heart. In course of time, Damayantī's vision, taking the form of a painter, painted in the ten directions pictures of Nala using as colours the pallor produced by separation, the red of passion, the blackness of stupor, and her (Damayanti's) own famous golden hue. Then, to cool the heat generated by separation, Damayantī applied to her limbs such things as sandal paste, lotus flowers, and combinations of lotus-stalks and aquatic creepers and the like which were offered to her by her female friends. Paintings 18.



PAINTING XIX

Now would Damayanti, striving thus to take her mind off the heat of separation, show to her female friends, the clouds that had appeared in the sky. She, together with her female friends, denounced them for their wickedness, because they caused a ceaseless burning sensation. Painting 19.



PAINTING XX

Then beholding the moon, Damayantī spoke to her friends thus: "O friends! ask the name of the teacher from whom he has learnt the art of burning the hearts of others. Does it come from the poison in the throat of Śiva, or from the submarine fire in the ocean? speak out. It is merely for the sin of killing love-lorn ladies that the moon is condemned to constant movement and ultimately gets dashed against

the rock of the dark night. It is through the sparks emitted by it that the sky has become starry. O friend! enquire of the moon on my behalf; say that Damayantī questions you thus—'O moon! what for do you, who are high-born, commit this heinous crime of killing the love-lorn? If you have disregarded your noble birth from the Ocean, the repository of jewels, have you also forgotten your exalted position on the head of Śiva? He who is of high lineage and moves in the company of the good, does not harm others. You have forgotten both your high birth and your association with the good. O moon! Why did you not meet your end like Vātāpa in the digestive fire inside the stomach of Agastya, who had drunk the entire ocean? It is because he rejected you for your committing excessive heat. O moon! do not think that the mind of Bhīma's daughter, when she is no more, will merge in you just because the Vedas say that the mind becomes merged in the moon after death. The wise Cupid pronounces that this Vedic saying pertains only to the moon that is Nala's face. Even though tormented beyond measure, I shall never be subservient to you. (But I shall always be faithful to Nala. This is the intention of the saying.) O moon! by killing persons like myself you will attain great fame. Therefore, kill me instantly, but without pain, for pain now is unbearable for me.' O friends! find out why does my young pet *cakora* not become a disciple of the sage Agastya? Let it learn the art of swallowing the moon from Agastya who swallowed the ocean. The beams of the moon will be but a few drops for him who will thus have mastered the art of drinking an ocean. That will be the end of the moon. O friend! place my mirror outside the house, and when the moon has entered it in the form of reflection smite him with the blow of a club. But now enough of the censure of the moon which is so far off." Thinking on these lines, the daughter of Bhīma then cursed Cupid, which had entered her heart, in these words: "O bodiless one! if you have taken shelter in my heart, why do you burn your abode? O wretch! having burnt in a moment your own fuel, you will yourself, like fire, also perish. O bodiless one! it was in retribution for the pain generated by you that you were justly offered by Śiva as oblation in the fire of his third eye." Later, the daughter of Bhīma, unable to speak much, somehow formulated the answers to the questions put by her female friends. The friends spoke first, and then the daughter of Bhīma.

Friend— O Damayantī! protect your life from the heartless Cupid by using your natural fortitude in distress.

Damayantī— O friend! at present life itself is an enemy. How is it that you are asking me to protect the enemy?

Friend— O daughter of Bhīma! here rises the moon. Why do you experience heat when its rays are composed of nectar?

Damayantī— O friend! if only the constituent *kalās* (digits) of this blemished one were to become extinct, wherefrom then will affliction emanate?

Friend— O Damayantī! why don't you like the cuckoo which gives out the sound *'kuhū'*!

Damayantī— O friend! do not think that through the word *kuhū* it is calling for the *amāvasyā*. For me it

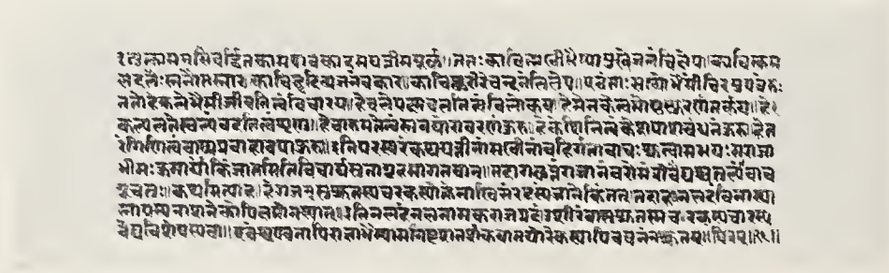
is uttering a meaningless sound, and not making that call.

Friend— O daughter of Bhīma! Nala is present in your own heart; then why do you pine for him?

Damayantī— O friend! he does indeed dwell in my heart; it is his absence outside of me that torments me.

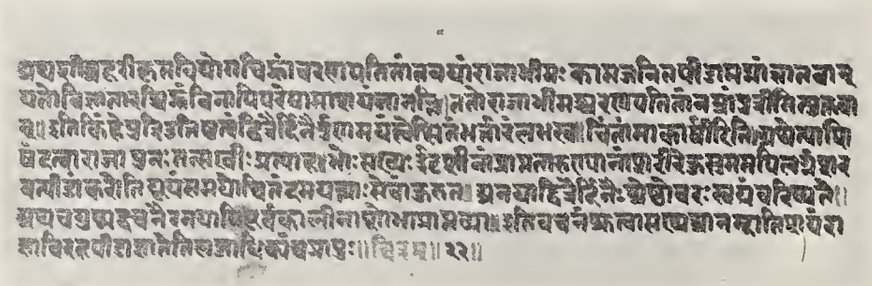
Friend— O daughter of Bhīma! the jewel of your necklace being split asunder by the fire of separation, your heart is bereft of ornaments.

Damayaṇtī— O friend! if my lover is taken away from me, even by the heart then I am done with. Painting 20.



PAINTING XXI

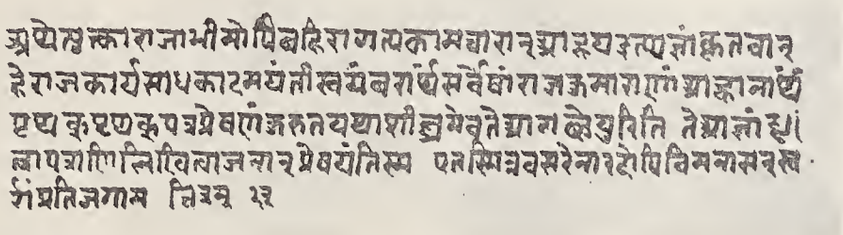
Having said this, Damayantī, in whose mind the fire caused by Cupid had been fanned, fell into a swoon. Then some female friend sprinkled water over her face; some one covered her breasts with lotus leaves; another fanned her over the heart; yet another applied sandal paste to her body. Thus did the friends of the daughter of Bhīma attend to her for a long time. In their confusion the friends spoke to each other thus: "O Kalā! see if Bhīma's daughter is still alive. O Calā! check if her eye-lashes still move. O Menakā! watch the twitching of her lips. O Kalpalatā! listen and find out if she speaks little. O Cārumatī! cover her breasts, O Keśinī! tie up her luxuriant hair. O Taraṅgiṇi! you wipe the flow of tears". Overhearing these words, King Bhīma became frightened, and thinking that something had happened to his daughter, entered her chamber. Then the senior minister and the physician spoke alike and said to the king who was going inside: "O king! we know the whole secret from what has been said by Suśruta and Caraka, viz. that nothing is capable of curing her heat excepting *nalada*. ('Nalada' means, 'he who bestows the king named Nala', or the fragrant root Uśira, or a famous spy or a physician of that name)." Even though the king heard this, he paid no heed to either of them, for he feared a hundred evils befalling his daughter. Painting 21.



PAINTING XXII

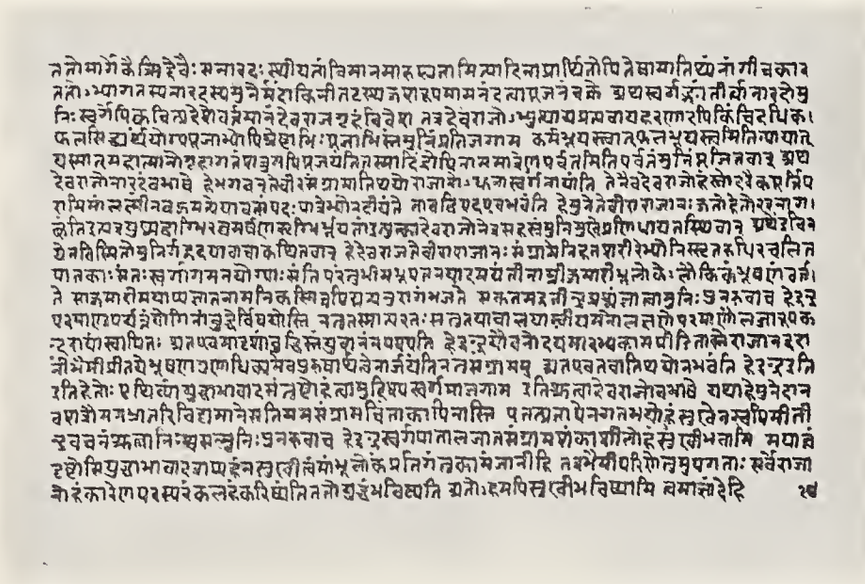
Then, King Bhīma fathomed that his daughter who had hastily concealed all signs of her pain born of separation and

who had fallen at his feet, was indeed suffering from the pangs of love, for the wise come to know of the intentions of others even without the help of outward signs. At this, king Bhīma spoke thus to his daughter who had humbly fallen at his feet: "Arise my daughter. May you obtain the virtuous husband whom you long for in two or three days. Do not fret." Having blessed (her) thus, the king again addressed her female friends in this manner: "O friends (of my daughter)! even a flower coming in contact with the body of those (maidens) that have attained youth, causes pain like an arrow. You should serve Damayantī in the manner that is proper to this time. She will herself choose an excellent husband in two or three days. She should, therefore, regain her former beauty through your efforts." Having heard this speech, Damayantī's friends were filled with joy; they also exhibited much bashfulness (at the thought) that the king had detected (Damayantī's) pangs of separation. Painting 22.



PAINTING XXIII

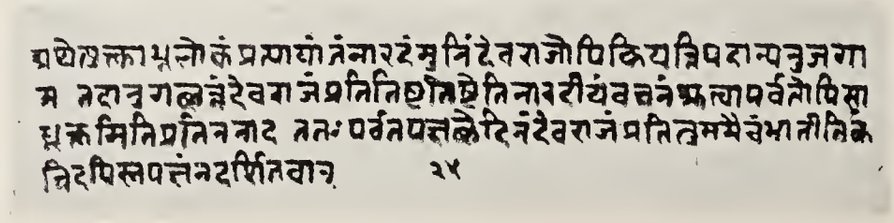
Having said this, and coming out, King Bhīma too summoned his executive officers and gave these orders: "O you who carry out royal business! send out separate letters inviting all royal princes to come to the *svayaṁvara* of Damayantī, as speedily as possible." Having heard these orders and having written the letters the officers sent out men to deliver them. At that time Nārada too, distracted in mind, proceeded towards heaven. Painting 23.



PAINTING XXIV

Nārada, though begged on the way by some gods (with the words), "Please stop, please get into the aerial car" etc., did not accept their offer. Later (the river) Mandākinī having offered to her guest, the sage Nārada, a seat in the form of the *kuśa* grass growing on its banks, offered

homage. Then, having crossed the celestial Gangā, Nārada entered the mansion of the king of the gods (Indra) situated in a quarter of the heavens. There Indra, rising and aiming at winning a reward greater than the (mere) removal of sins, went out to receive that sage with honours which were better than the honours offered to the worthy, in accordance with the maxim that plentiful fruit results from plentiful action. Because the great accord honour even to the enemy if he comes to (their) house, Indra (the enemy of *parvatas,* "mountains") too honoured the sage Parvata (Nārada) who was a *parvata* (mountain) in name only. Then Indra said to Nārada: "Revered Sir, those brave guests from the battle-fields, the kings, no longer come to heaven. Therefore I, who am Devarāja (the king of gods) do not think much of this fortune which serves only the purpose of filling my own belly. Till wealth is given away to the deserving, it constitutes only a calamity. O sage! for what reasons do those brave kings not come here any more? In this matter, let your words become the sin-destroying verses of the Vedas." Having said this, Indra fixing his thousand eyes on the sage's face, remained standing. Now the sage who was astonished at the humility of Indra spoke with happy voice: "O Indra! those brave kings, having their sins destroyed by the shedding of the blood of the bodies killed on the battle field are indeed fit to come to heaven. But the daughter of King Bhīma, the maiden Damayantī by name, resides in the terrestrial region as an ornament of the world. That maiden cherishes love for a certain young man whose name even I do not know." The sage then having understood Indra's (natural) question: "who is he?" spoke again: "O Indra! the reach of the intuition of *yogīs* is up to the atom, not beyond it. But he (whom she cherishes) has been tucked away in her modesty in a subtle form in the recess of her mind. Therefore, the intellect of persons like me is unable to find out who that young man is. O Indra! those kings having been tormented by Cupid since the advent of youth are now engaged in the acquisition of many ornaments and virtues and show no interest in (the glory of) war. It is because of this that they do not come to you as guests. O Indra! for these various reasons, and being unhappy with the absence of wars on earth, I have come to the heaven with you in mind." Heaving heard this, Indra said: "O sage! I have no worry at all on account of war, while there is my brother (Viṣṇu) who is the enemy of the demons. On account of his valour, being free from fear, I sleep peacefully." Having heard this utterance of Indra, the sage spoke again, heaving a sigh. "O Indra! I feel happy at the prospect of a war arising between gods and *asuras.* I have now seen you, but on account of the absence of war, I am not happy even here. Know me to be desirous of going towards the terrestrial region. There all the kings who have assembled to win the hand of the daughter of Bhīma will, out of jealousy, indulge in mutual quarrels. Then there will be a war and that will make me happy. Now, permit me to leave." Painting 24.

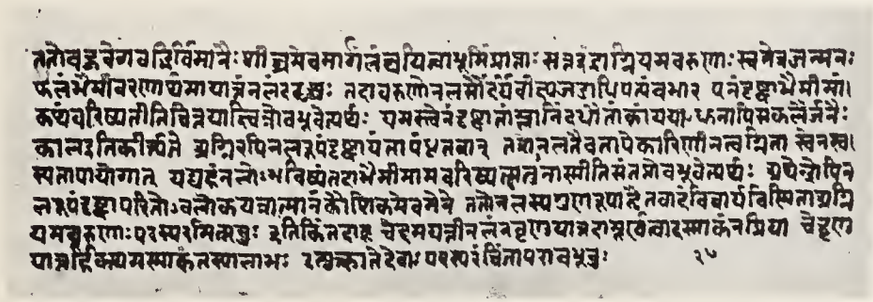


PAINTING XXV

Indra, saying that this be so, walked behind the sage Nārada, who was returning towards the terrestrial region, for a few steps. Then hearing the words that Nārada addressed to Indra asking him to "stay" (and not come any further), even the mountain echoed back: "Well said." Then the sage did not say anything else to Indra, the clipper of the wings of mountains. Painting 25.

PAINTING XXVI

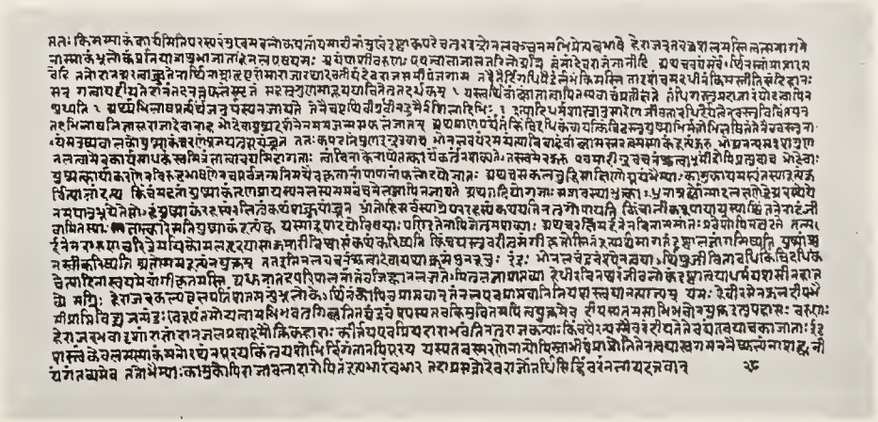
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PAINTING XXVII

Having covered the journey in swift aerial-cars and having reached the earth, Indra, Agni, Yama and Varuṇa then saw the fruit of the creation of their eyes, Nala, who was also proceeding to seek the hand of the daughter of Bhīma. Seeing the beauty of Nala, Varuṇa became petrified; the source of his concern was the thought, "Having seen Nala, how will Damayantī ever choose me?"

And Yama, having seen Nala, turned so black (with jealousy) that till now everyone calls him the Black One (lit. 'Kāla', also meaning Death). The heat that Agni experienced on seeing Nala was caused by the fact of his not being Nala, and not (a+Nala, Sanskrit for 'fire') because he was himself Fire, for one does not feel one's own heat. "Had I been Nala (and not 'Anala')", he thought, "then the daughter of Bhīma would have chosen me. But I am not him." This is what caused him such torment. Then Indra, too, having seen Nala's beauty, and looking all around, regarded himself as a mere owl ('Kauśika', also another name for Indra). Then pondering over the uniqueness of the virtues of Nala, (and) being amazed, Agni, Yama, and Varuṇa spoke to one another thus: "If Damayantī does not choose Nala, then will she not be dear to us, for this would only prove her foolishness. And yet, if she does choose him, how can *we* obtain her?" Having said this, the gods became all worried. Painting 27.



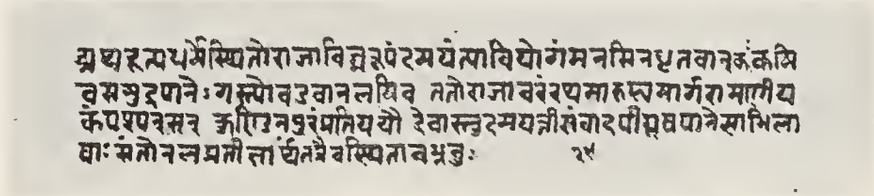
PAINTING XXVIII

Then Indra who is a master of deceit, seeing the inquiring faces of Yama and others who were wondering what to do addressed Nala thus with the intent of tricking him: "O King! are you doing well? This meeting with you has made our journey to the terrestrial region auspicious. O Nala! this is Yama; this, the noose-holder Varuṇa; and this is Agni who is covered with a mass of flames. Know you, that I am Indra, and that we have all come to you as suppliants." Then the king, munificent as he was, was thrilled on hearing the names of the 'suppliants', and alighting from his chariot, went towards Indra. Wondering however as to what it is that is difficult for these lords of the quarters to obtain, and whether he owned the things they desired, Nala spoke to Indra in the following strain, resolved to gift anything to him, even his life, as ordained by the *dharmaśāstras*.

> "The charity that is given by going (to the recipient) is said to merit limitless reward; that which is given by calling (the recipient) yields thousandfold (merit); and when it is given on request (by the recipient), it only brings half that reward. (1.)
>
> "Shame on the donor who, knowing the desire of the suppliant, waits for his word (of request). Such a one is not purified even after making the gift. (2). He who is not born for the fulfilment of the wishes of the suppliant, is a burden on the earth, and not the trees, the mountains and the like." (3.)

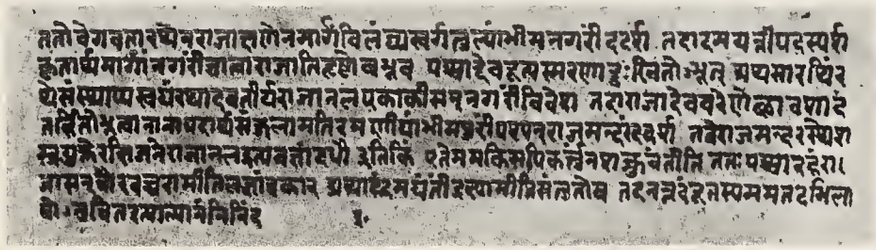
Desirous of knowing their wish, the king said to the gods: "O gods! my life has become meaningful by seeing you. Whatever it is that you want of me, even if it be my life or something more precious than that, this mortal will make an offering of it at your feet. Please speak." (Then Indra said) "O Nala! we desire to marry Damayantī. Please become our emissary (to her) in this matter. O Nala! having known you who are possessed of rare virtues, it is you alone as our friend who can gain us our end; to you have we come here. This task cannot be performed by anyone but you." Having heard these words of Indra, Nala, the lord of the earth, replied: "O gods! by not carrying out your wish, and by saying anything against it I will be inviting retribution for sins committed by me in previous births. But you, who know the minds of everyone, have ordered me, who am also desirous of obtaining the daughter of Bhīma, to act as your messenger to her. Don't you who are great feel any shame in practising a fraud upon me, Nala, who is equal to but a straw! I have gone through the seven states of mind arising from separation from her. Say now: how shall I be able to keep your secret? I am now going through the two states characterised by swooning and insanity; a person in this state is liable to spill out the secrets of others and is unable to conceal it. On coming face to face with her, the contemplation, of whose divine form sustains me, how shall I be able to act as your messenger. It is impossible, even for a wise man, to resist the temptations offered by beauty. Moreover, I cannot even effect entry into the inner apartments without killing the guards; how will that tender-hearted maiden then place trust in me if my conduct has to

be so ruthless? Again she will be overwhelmed with bashfulness when she sees him (Nala) whom she has decided to select, coming as a messenger on behalf of others; and will not accept you. Therefore, sending me as you envoy is not proper." Hearing these words of Nala, the gods again spoke each in his turn. Indra (said): " O Nala! you who belong to the (proud) Lunar Dynasty have already agreed of your own accord to give to the suppliants your own life, and even more. Now does not your tongue experience shame in failing to keep your word? Surely, this is cause for shame. O resolute one! knowing that this world of the mortals is perishable, you should not abandon religious duty and fame." Agni (spoke thus): "O King! you should not spurn an honour that no one else on this earth has ever received, the honour of having Indra himself, the lord of the wish-granting tree as a suppliant." Yama (said): "O you, the light of the family of Vīrasena! the darkness of anguish produced by the obstacles in the way of winning the hand of the daughter of Bhīma, desires to overpower you to-day. Would this be fitting for you who are born in the Lunar race? It is improper that light be overpowered by darkness." Varuṇa (said): "O King! for kings like you, only the glories whose pearl-necklaces are formed by streams of gift-waters (poured at the time of making gifts) make good wives, and not the daughters of kings. Moreover we, who ourselves grant boons to others, have become your suppliants. You should therefore not only fulfil our wishes, but also fill the limits of the quarters with your glories. You, by the mere thinking of whom even others obtained desired objects, should not apprehend the failure of your mission. You must go." At this the king, even though eager to obtain the daughter of Bhīma for himself, undertook to bear the burden of being an emissary, which was thus forced on him. Then Indra greatly pleased, bestowed upon Nala the superhuman gift of becoming invisible at will. Painting 28.



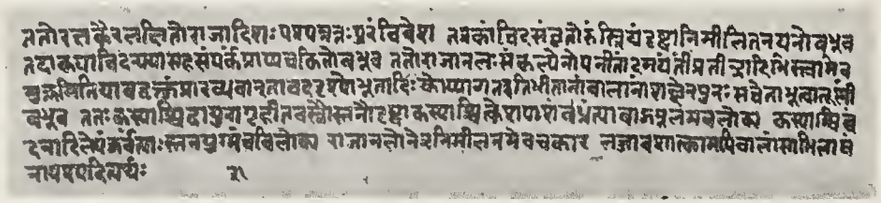
PAINTING XXIX

The king, having taken upon himself the role of an emissary, decided to suppress within his mind the separation from Damayantī (and not allow it to become) an obstacle: just as Agastya had also to keep within his belly the sub-marine fire when he drank the ocean. Now, riding on an excellent chariot, and casting a glance at lovely objects on the way, the king set off towards Kuṇḍinapura. The gods, however, possessed of the desire to drink the nectar of the news that they expected from Damayantī, stayed on there in order to wait for Nala. Painting 29.



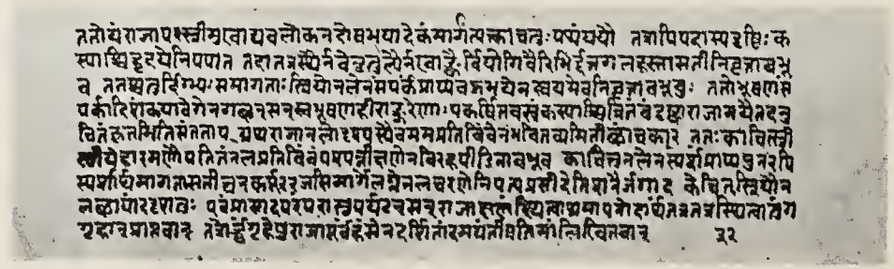
PAINTING XXX

Then the king, having covered the journey instantly with the swift chariot, saw the city of Bhīma, which was the equal of heaven (in splendour). Knowing that the paths of that city had been blessed with the touch of Damayantī's feet, he became greatly pleased; (but) soon afterwards, he became sad on remembering his role as an emissary of the gods. Then leaving his charioteer behind in the chariot, and himself alighting, the king, Nala, entered the city alone. Assuming an invisible form through the boon of the gods, and seeing the city of Bhīma, which was crowded with various things and was exceedingly lovely, the king saw the royal palace. In this state Nala saw with confident contempt the armed guards posted outside the royal palace, for they, he thought, can do me no harm. Subsequently, however, he felt ashamed at the thought that, being a king, he was moving about stealthily like a thief. Again, first he felt gratified at the thought of seeing Damayantī, but later chided himself, for such a desire on his part, who was an emissary, was improper. Painting 30.



PAINTING XXXI

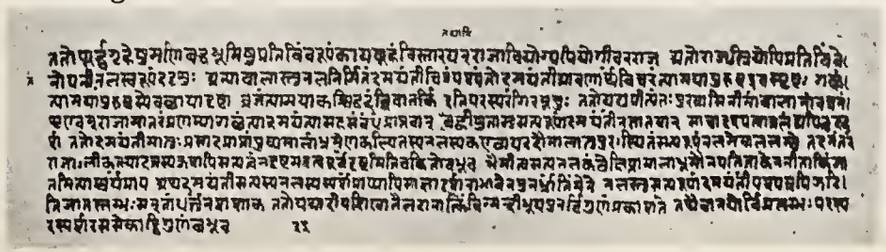
The King, unseen by the guards, and looking around in (all) directions, entered the inner apartments. There, noticing a certain lady whose thighs were uncovered, (he) closed his eyes. Then he became flustered as his body came into contact with someone else's. Then as King Nala, visualizing himself in the presence of Damayantī, began to address her thus: "So have Indra and others said to you," he became conscious (of his inadvertently speaking out) by the noise of the frightened young maidens who thought his to be the voice of an invisible ghost, and fell silent. Seeing, again, the breasts of some maiden, uncovered by breeze, the arm-pits of another who was tying up her lovely hair, and the pair of breasts of yet another who was applying on them sandal paste etc., King Nala simply closed his eyes, out of modesty not wanting to look at any girl lustfully. Painting 31.



PAINTING XXXII

The King then abandoned that one path, afraid of committing the sin of looking at the faces etc. of women belonging to others and betook himself to the crossway (in the courtyard). But even there when his eye fell on some (maiden's) bosom, it turned back, as if seized by the throat

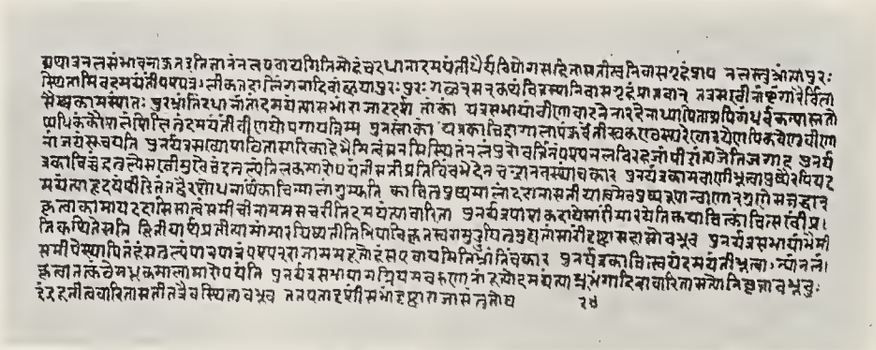
and pushed back by the crescent-shaped nail marks thereon which are the enemies of those who are separated from their beloveds. Occasionally the women (of the palace) who had come together from the four quarters, withdrew suddenly in great fright when their bodies came into contact with Nala's. Then, moving quickly for fear of contact with ornaments, and having seen the buttocks of some (maiden) uncovered by being caught and pulled away by the point of the diamond in his own ornaments, the King felt remorse that what he had done was improper. King Nala had wished that his form be capable of being reflected even though (he himself remained) invisible. At this a maiden seeing Nala's form reflected in the jewel of her necklace (longed for him and) became in a moment tormented by separation (from him). Another, having once rubbed against Nala and returning for another touch, fell at Nala's foot print left on the thick camphor-dust of the track and slowly said, "Favour me." Some other women saw Nala reflected (in mirrors). Thus, wandering among a succession of palace (chambers) the King stopped for a while for removing his fatigue and then reached (other) lofty mansions. There, high up in the chambers, the King painted a picture of Damayantī as she had been described to him earlier by the swan. Painting 32.



PAINTING XXXIII

The King, assuming a multitude of forms in the shape of reflections on the jewel-studded floors of the upper chambers became resplendent as a *yogī* although he was only a love-lorn victim of separation. The royal ladies, too, saw Nala's form as close to themselves in the reflections. Other maidens, seeing the portrait of Damayantī painted by Nala, began to say to each other so that Damayantī might hear: "While I was strolling about I touched a man, it seemed." (Or): "While going, I saw a shadow like that of a man." (Or): "While departing I fancied as if I heard someone speaking." Although the King after hearing the words of the maidens residing in the inner apartments had bodily come in contact with Damayantī who was returning from making obeisance to her mother, (he) had not truly spotted her amongst those many (maidens); nor did she see Nala on account of his being invisible. But then when Damayantī placed the flower garland obtained from her mother as a token of blessings, around the neck of Nala whom she was thinking of in her imagination, the garland rested on the real Nala who was standing in front of her. At that, the King was amazed reflecting that an imaginary gift was never real, and thus he had seen a miracle. The daughter of Bhīma too was seized with astonishment that the garland thrown round the neck of an imaginary Nala should not have fallen on the ground. (She mused): "Who has taken it away? What has become of it?" Now Damayantī, even though she had touched the real Nala, thought it to be an illusion for she had not seen him with her eyes. And Nala, on his part, saw the

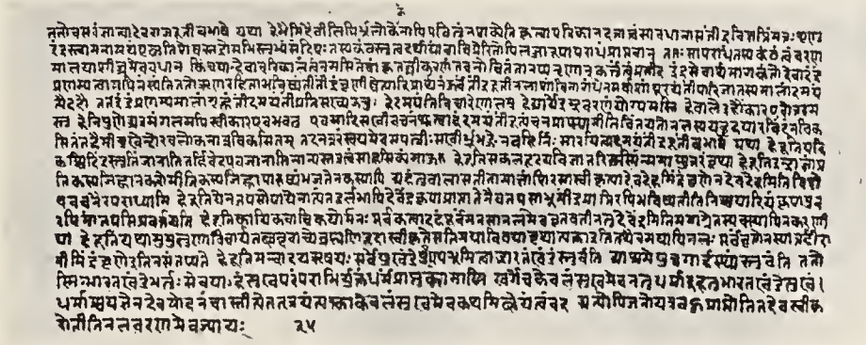
real Damayantī, but being suddenly petrified, was not able to hold her. Then just as the flame of the lamp momentarily becomes a little dim on account of the pouring of oil, but then again shines forth doubly, the delusion of these two became two-fold being nourished by the sap (of pleasure) of each other's touch. Painting 33.



PAINTING XXXIV

Then Damayantī, torn between the realization that there could be no possibility of Nala (being) there, and the infatuation that this must be Nala only, and accompanied both by patience and separation, went towards her residential chamber. Nala, too, imagining Damayantī still in front of him, and moving on and on (towards her) out of a desire for embracing her unreal form, somehow reached her chamber. There, the king saw the court of Damayantī, which resembled the inner-apartments of Cupid because of the erotic longings and passion-filled conduct of her female friends. It was a court in which the Gandharva maidens though disciples of Nārada in (the art of) playing upon the *vīṇā*, were singing to the accompaniment of the *vīṇā* before Damayantī to impart to her a skill greater even than Nārada's. Again: some songstress proclaimed in the three lines on her throat, a vocal victory over a cuckoo, a flute and a *vīṇā*. Again, in this court, the starling, taught by her female-friends, spoke thus: "O Damayantī! you see Nala whom you enshrine in your heart as standing before you:" and, "give up the torment born of separation from Nala." Again: there, someone applying a moon-shaped *tilak* on her friend's moon-like face produced an endless series of moons in the variety of reflections. There someone wore a garland piercing the flowers that had become the arrows of Cupid in revenge for their having caused pain to the heart of Damayantī. And someone, offering a garland of flowers, was stopped by Damayantī (who said sarcastically): "You are indeed my true friend who are offering to Cupid arrows in the form of flowers tied to a string." Again, there when someone said to another " 'Kill' the chessman on the board", the latter found the starling ready to fly in panic that she was going to be killed and broke into laughter. Again, there, in that court, the King, seeing near the daughter of Bhīma a drinking-vessel made in the shape of a swan mistook it to be the same swan who was his emissary. Again, there some other (damsel) herself impersonated Damayantī, and making another one Nala, placed a garland of Madhuka flowers around his neck. There, in that court, (he saw) the lady messenger of Agni, Yama and Varuṇa withdraw, as if turned away by the knitting of Damayantī's eye-brow, and the lady

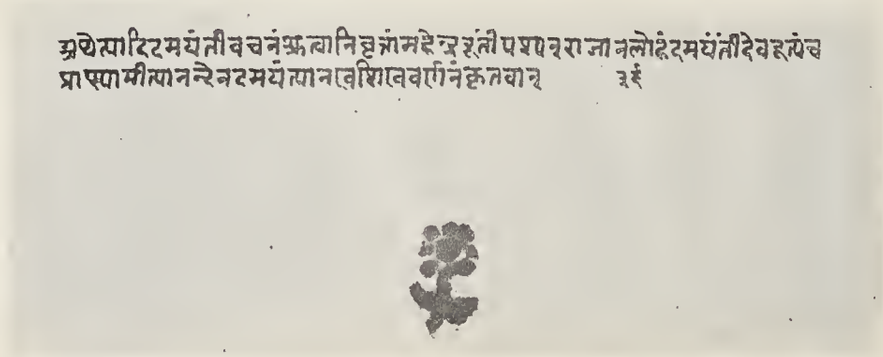
messenger of Indra (who had been sent earlier) who had not yet been sent away, remained standing. Then Nala, having seen Damayantī's court of this description, felt gratified. Painting 34.



PAINTING XXXV

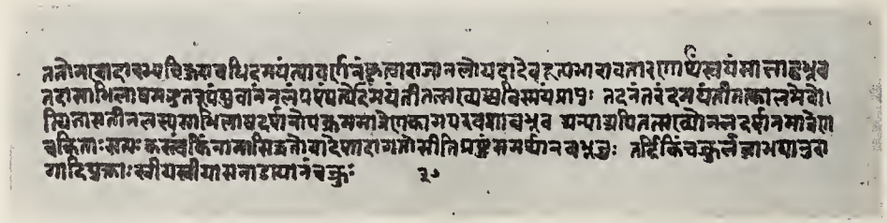
Indra's lady messenger, finding an opportunity, spoke as follows: "O Bhīma's daughter! as no one on this earth can decipher the divine writing, no letter has been given (to me) for you (by Indra). Only hear from me, then, attentively, the request of Indra, 'Indra asks you about your welfare. The rest has been conveyed to you by the hair on his body. But his throat, even though it was urged respectfully to speak to you, committed the blunder of modesty. Therefore, his throat which is at fault you should soon ensnare with the garland meant for choosing (your husband in the *svayaṁvara)*. It is not proper for you to show ingratitude to the gods to whom you bow three times a day. Be pleased and make them also free from the debt (they owe you). The gods that come to wait upon Indra shall bow to you too after having bowed to Indra'. Thus it is that they shall be free from debt. Choose you, therefore, Indra." Making pleas of this sort, the lady messenger of Indra gave to Damayantī a garland of Pārijāta flowers, which filled all the quarters (āśā) except the hope (āśā) of Nala, with its fragrance. Then her female-friends spoke to Damayantī who, having bowed to Indra, was receiving the garland. "O Damayantī! let there be no more thinking about it. O Noble-one! Indra is worthy of being chosen. O maiden! let only 'yes' be your reply in this case. O shrewd one! let your acceptance be the auspicious reply." The lotus that was the heart of Nala who, on hearing these words of the female-friends, was thinking that he would neither obtain Damayantī nor (discharge his duty) as an emissary, did not bloom forth, even though it was seeing the moon-like face of Damayantī. After that Damayantī, having herself dismissed her jealous friends with a movement of her eye-brow, spoke to the lady- messenger of Indra as follows. "O emissary! if anyone knows how to praise Indra, it is the Veda alone and none else; (therefore) do not venture in this field. It is futile for me to give a reply to him who knows the minds of all. O emissary! whose tongue can utter 'no' to the order of Indra? But I having accepted that order with bowed head, being a maiden, choose for myself Indra of non-divine, not of divine, body. By making this distinction (between divine and non-divine) I am committing a sin. O emissary! through that very penance which brought me the hard-to-get favours of the lord of the gods (Indra), I shall win the lord of the earth (Nala). This conviction induces me to undergo more penance. O emissary! because the mind has precedence over the (inclination of) body and speech, and I have mentally chosen Nala already, and not the lord of the gods,

not even a mention should be made of him before me. When a person desirous of obtaining release from the cycle of births and deaths once accepts in his heart Brahman signified by the word *tat* ('that'), he never regrets renouncing sensual delights; in the same way, I too have no regret that because I have already chosen Nala, I would now not be able to choose Indra. Sages like Manu extol the region of Bharata for its sacredness; amongst the stages of life, they extol the householder stage. Therefore in this land of Bharata (on earth), I am desirous of combining religious merit with conjugal happiness in the form of serving my husband. In heaven, there is happiness, but no religious merits. But here in the region of Bharata, there is happiness and religious merit, and an opportunity for the propitiation of gods with sacrifices etc. Tell me now, how should I give preference to happiness alone over all these three? It is natural for everyone to choose that which yields the maximum profit. Therefore is the choosing of Nala by me perfectly justified?" Painting 35.



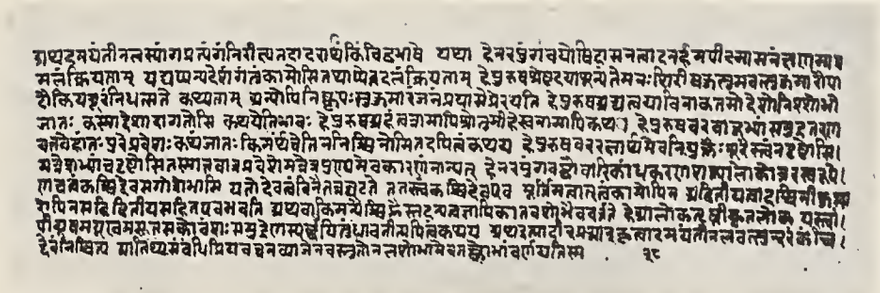
PAINTING XXXVI

King Nala, then, seeing the lady-messenger of Indra depart after having heard these words of Damayantī embarked upon a tresses-to-toenails description of Damayantī's beauty to himself, out of joy that he shall be able to win over Damayantī even as he shall be able to accomplish his office as emissary of the gods. Painting 36.



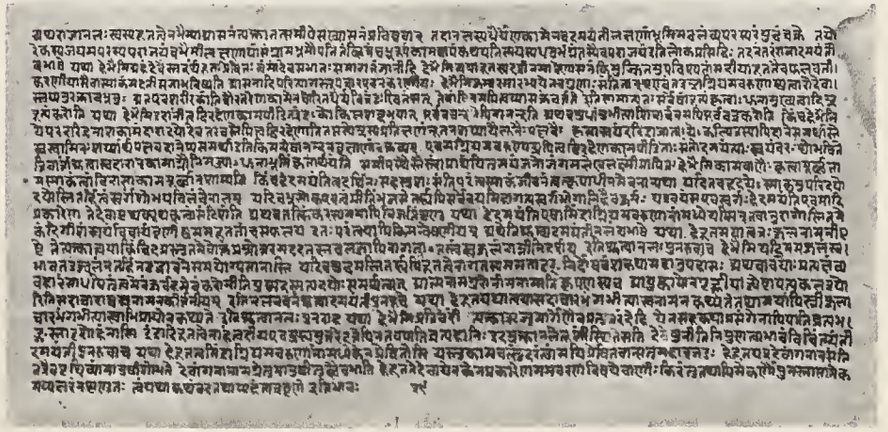
PAINTING XXXVII

After King Nala had finished this description of Damayantī, beginning with the toenails and ending with the hair, he made himself visible, in order to discharge the burden of his duty as an emissary. Seeing youthful Nala of surpassing beauty appear suddenly before them, Damayantī and her friends were wonder-struck. After that Damayantī, rising up from her seat at that very moment, and smitten by the passion of love, gazed with longing eyes at Nala. Her friends too, having become amazed at the mere sight of Nala, were unable to put such questions to him as "Who are you? What is your name? From which country have you come etc.?" Being overwhelmed with such emotions as modesty, fear and love etc. they all got up from their respective seats. Painting 37.



PAINTING XXXVIII

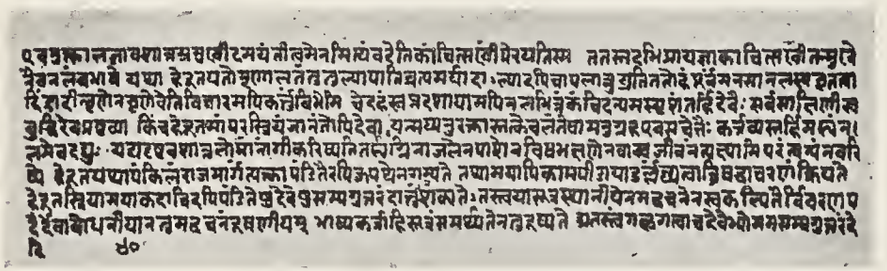
Then Damayantī looking at Nala from head to foot and in order to do him honour (offered him her own seat as she) spoke "O best of men! please adorn this seat if only for a moment, even if it is unworthy of you, being a lady's seat. Although you may be desirous of going to another land, please adorn this seat. O best of men! your heart is devoid of compassion. How far would you take your feet which are tender like a *śirīṣa* flower? He who sent you is also devoid of kindliness that he should have asked so tender a person as you to exert. Which country, Sir, tell us, has to-day become lustreless through your having come away from it! I am desirous of hearing your name, too; so please tell your name. O best among men! how have you managed to enter these inner apartments (which is a task as difficult as) the crossing of the ocean with a pair of arms (alone)? I am unable to understand what for have you done this; so please speak. O excellent one! you have come unseen by the brave guards and have been seen by my eyes alone. It must be the religious merit of my eyes alone which is the cause of this, nothing else. Your power of making the door-keepers blind and your unearthly beauty suggest that you are akin to the gods, for divine origin alone can be responsible for this. You are, indeed, therefore, some god. As you possess a body, you cannot be Cupid either. Being single, you are not an Aśvinīkumāra too, because one of them will always be accompanied by the other. But it is no use counting your marks of distinction: your splendour alone distinguishes you from all others. O you who have illumined the world by your lustre, which is the lineage that has given birth to you that emit rays of nectar and (which lineage is) running the race of vying with the ocean (the source of the moon)? Please speak of this too." Then having put questions like these, Damayantī, convinced that he was some god, beautiful as Nala, (and) using the pretext of (uttering) endearing words connected with the offering of hospitality, described his splendour, which in reality was the splendour of none else than Nala. Painting 38.



PAINTING XXXIX

King Nala, conscious of his status of an emissary, left the seat of Damayantī, and occupied the seat of her friend close to her. Then the fortitude and the love-longings of Nala fought a battle royal with Damayantī as the battle-field. Of the two, the victory of one and the defeat of the other, was declared by the bow of Cupid in the form of the eye-brows of Damayantī, which was broken and had fallen in the battlefield in the form of the daughter of Bhīma. It is well-known in this world that 'his is the defeat, whose bow is broken'. Then, the King addressed Damayantī as follows: "O daughter of Bhīma! I have been sent as an emissary by the gods for your sake. Know me as having come from the assembly of the gods. O daughter of Bhīma! why have you left your seat at the sight of a mere emissary? Please sit down. If my mission proves successful, that will be enough honour for me. Giving me your seat etc. is only formal courtesy, (and) should not be done. Hearing of your virtues beginning with virginity, the four gods, Indra, Agni, Yama and Varuṇa, have become enamoured of you. Therefore their minds too, with their wealth of fortitude having been stolen by Cupid who is an expert thief of the lustre of the body, have become attached to you." Having thus served as the spokesman of all of them in a general way, he (Nala) now took up the duty of being an emissary of Indra chiefly, in this manner: "O daughter of Bhīma! now Indra, tormented by Cupid on account of separation from you, does not find delight, as before, even in his Nandana (garden) for fear of hearing the notes of the cuckoo. No more does he perform the worship of Śiva out of the fear of the moon. Moreover, O daughter of Bhīma! those divine trees like *Mandānsa,* etc. too which are the destroyers of the poverty of others, have themselves become destitute on account of their shoots being plucked every minute for the bed of Indra who is afire with longing on account of separation from you. Those who are capable of bestowing upon others the fulfilment of their desires are no longer able to give their sprouts even for the bed of their own lord; so what should be said of the other trees of Nandana (garden)? Thus Agni, Yama and Varuṇa, too, being tormented by Cupid in your separation, and hearing the news that "Damayantī's *svayaṁvara* will take place tomorrow, are now gracing this earth, having cast their own wives in the fire of passion. By them who are not far, I have been raised to the splendid status of a living missive in order to beseech you. O daughter of Bhīma! the gods say that the stupor of love-passion which has come over us who are losing our senses through the arrows of Cupid, will not be relieved without you. Besides, O Damayantī! those who desire you are in thousands, but our lives depend upon your favour alone and on nothing else. If there is any feeling for us in your heart, then will you grace the heavenly regions. Do not, therefore, delay. And if your pleasure is to stay on the earth only, even then all of us, being here, shall enjoy the pleasures of heaven here itself, for heaven is where we are'. O Damayantī! in these diverse ways do those gods send you each their plea. And now you listen to me too, who am their servant. O Damayantī! choose from among Indra, Agni, Yama and Varuṇa after careful consideration that very guardian of the quarter whom you love, and crown my mission with success. What more than this can you seek?"

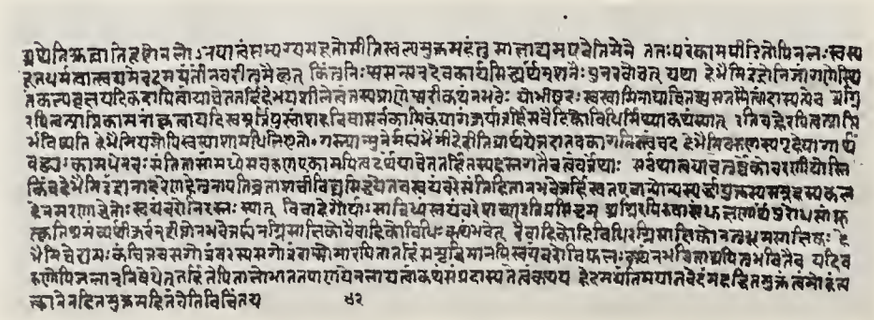
Then Damayantī,having heard this, addressed Nala thus; "O emissary! I asked you your name and family but you ignored this and spoke of something that is not relevant. You did not even feel embarrassed in avoiding answering these questions. Tell me now your family and name." Having heard this, Nala again said "O daughter of Bhīma! if my family is not illustrious as it is, then I have not the competence to elevate it; and if it is noble then talk of my flawless lineage is laughable for I am here as a mere emissary. Moreover, in transacting our present business simply the use of the words 'You' and 'I' in such expression as 'you do like this', 'I do like that' would suffice. It is enjoined by the rules of good behaviour that, 'one's own name, the name of one's preceptor, that of a great miser, as also of the eldest offspring as well as that of the wife, should not be pronounced by one desirous of (long) life', therefore, one's own name should not be mentioned." Having heard this utterance of Nala, Damayantī again spoke as follows: "O emissary! just as you are not uttering your own name for fear of infringing good conduct, I, too, am not revealing my intention for fear of violating the rules of good conduct prescribed for women." Having heard this, Nala again spoke as follows: "O daughter of Bhīma! leave this game of repartee aside and give me a straight-forward answer. I am not the kind of man by merely talking to whom you will be infringing your vow of devotion to the husband. By virtue of being an emissary of Indra and others, I am yours too. Your vow of faithfulness to the husband will suffer no injury if you give me a reply." Saying this Nala fell silent. Then Damayantī, thinking that the gods were wanting in politic conduct, spoke as follows: "O emissary! by whom, from amongst Indra, Agni, Yama and Varuṇa, have you been sent? He who has sent you must be a fool for you yourself appear beautiful as Cupid himself to me. O emissary! a mortal woman looks beautiful on this earth only where there are no heavenly damsels. Compared to heavenly damsels, a woman of the earth is of no consequence. Whatever be the speeches that the gods might make in respect of my choice (of a husband) my ears do not pay heed to even a single word." She meant that 'say what you will, I will not choose any of them.' Painting 39.



PAINTING XL

Having spoken thus, Damayantī with her face lowered on account of modesty, urged some of her friends to speak to him in the following manner. Then a friend who knew her mind spoke to Nala, as if through her (Damayantī's) mouth itself, "O emissary! the limit of propriety of devotedness to the husband is like the lotus stalk which snaps by the slightest act of rashness. Therefore, by reason of (my) having already chosen Nala in my mind, I am now afraid

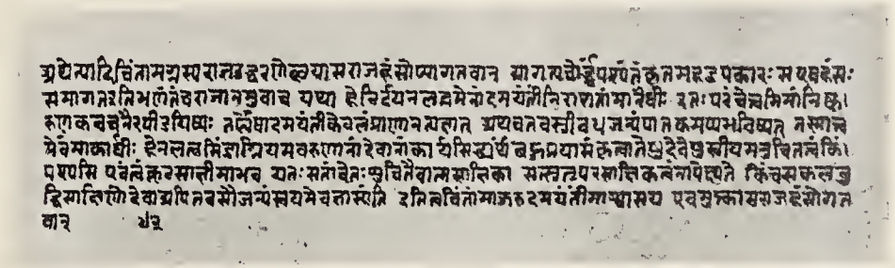
even to entertain the thought of choosing Indra or any of the others. If even in a dream have I touched anyone other than Nala, then the gods should question their senses which are said to cognise everything. Further, if the gods knowing well that I am another's wife, cherish love for me, it is only their kindness, and if it is kindness that they wish to show me, then let them give me Nala himself. If fate decrees that Nala should not accept me, then I shall take my own life by fire, by water, by a noose, or by swallowing poison; I shall not choose another person. O emissary! just as wise men would abandon a royal causeway that is muddy and take a bad path, I, finding the torment of love unbearable, am taking a forbidden course. I, being a woman, am unable to give a suitable reply to the wise gods; inform the gods therefore in your own words which should expand like a commentary my aphorism-brief statements. Only do not misinterpret what I have said for the writer of a commentary should only support an aphorism, not find fault with it. Therefore go and give to the gods my proper reply". Painting 40.



PAINTING XLI

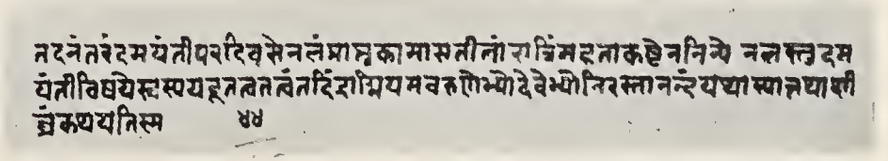
Nala, overjoyed at hearing this, still said to himself, "She has made an understatement in saying that I am simply an emissary of Yama; (at this moment) I am Yama incarnate." With this thought in his mind, Nala, though tormented by the passion of love, did not desire to win Damayantī for himself for his role was that of an emissary. Heaving sighs, he once again spoke in a low tone, to further the accomplishment of the mission of the gods: "O daughter of Bhīma! If, at any time, Indra should ask for you from the wish-granting (Kalpa) tree standing in his courtyard, then would you not, O tender one! become the partner of his life? That tree which is the grantor of wishes being thus approached by his master, will certainly bestow you upon him. Should Agni likewise, having resolved to obtain you, perform a fulfiller-of-all-wishes sacrifice to his own three forms (i.e. the three sacrificial fires), then how would that Vedic ritual go futile? In this manner even Agni will obtain you. O daughter of Bhīma! if Yama makes this request to the sage Agastya who occupies his (Yama's) quarter (the South): 'Get me the daughter of Bhīma', then what will be your plight? You tell me. O daughter of Bhīma! There are many wish-granting cows, kept for rituals connected with yajñas in the house of Varuṇa. From amongst them, should Varuṇa request any one with respect to you, then you will virtually be in his hand. In any event, you have to choose one of these four. Moreover, O daughter of Bhima! by reason of your showing disrespect to Indra, his faithful wife, Śacī, may not even come to your *svayaṁvara* for ensuring the over-

coming of obstacles. In that case deaths might result from fighting among the princes vying with each other (for your hand), and the *svayaṁvara* itself may have to be put off. It is well-known that at a marriage it is Gaurī who presides and at a *svayaṁvara*, Śacī. Agni, too, out of anger, rendering useless the labours of priests trying to enkindle the fire, may not burn. Then how will it be possible to perform the marriage ceremony when there is no fire to witness it? Surely a marriage ceremony needs fire as a witness, not smoke. O daughter of Bhīma! If Yama were to kill tomorrow any of your kinsmen or any kinsman of the bridegroom, then will the *svayaṁvara*, grand though it be, not be a failure? Of course, it will. If Varuṇa, too, were to withhold waters, then how will your father bestow you upon Nala even as he covetously extends his hand? Speak, O Damayantī! I have said much (that is) of great benefit to you. Discard this infatuation and consider carefully whether what I have said to you is beneficial or not." Painting 41.



PAINTING XLII

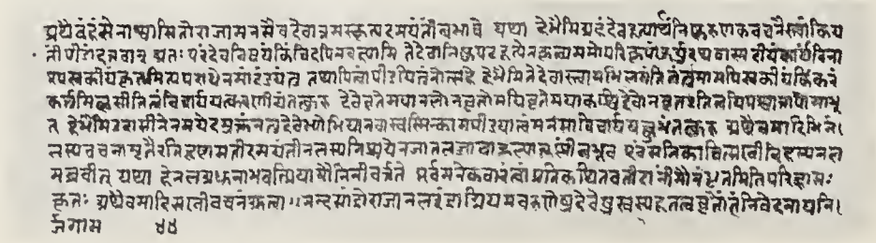
At this time that royal swan too (suddenly) arrived to rescue the King drowning in worry. Having arrived, he spoke as follows to the King, who was looking upwards and was saying, "That very swan who did me a great favour has arrived." "O heartless Nala!" (the swan said) "do not drive Damayantī to despair. If you torment her any more with pitiless speeches, she would only give up her life. Consequently, you would commit the sin of 'killing a woman'. Act not in this manner. O Nala! having exerted yourself a great deal for the success of the mission of Indra, Agni, Yama and Varuṇa, what unfairness do you see (your-self doing) towards these gods? You will not give them a false report; the purity of the heart of the good people itself is their witness. The testimony of others is not required in the case of good people. Moreover, the gods, too who are witnesses to all intentions, will themselves have come to know of your goodness. Therefore, do not worry. Give assurances to Damayantī." Having said this, that royal swan flew away. Painting 43 (42?)



PAINTING XLIII

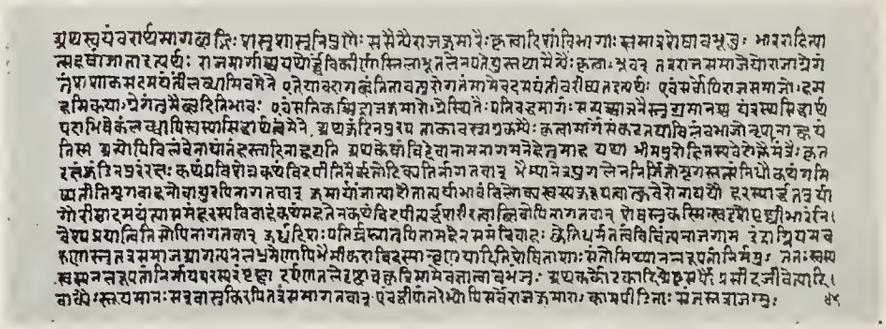
Then the King having thus been consoled by the Swan, (and) bowing to the gods inwardly, spoke thus to Damayantī: "O daughter of Bhīma! while acting as the emissary of the gods, I have caused you some pain. Beyond this, I shall say

nothing about the gods. Those gods may now confer favours on me for having pleaded their cause without deceit, or may even punish me, (thinking) that having spoilt their cause, I have served mine. In any case I dare not trouble you. O daughter of Bhīma! Those gods covet you, but you are bent upon making me a servant of yours. Therefore, do what should be done, after having (carefully) considered (the matter). Let there be no regret (in your mind) that "I chose the gods and not Nala" or in case you choose me that, "I did not choose some god." O daughter of Bhīma! I have said this because I am neutral, not out of fear of the gods, nor on account of my own pangs of love. Having weighed it in your mind, you do what is auspicious." Then Damayantī, filled with delight by Nala's nectar-like utterances became silent feeling excessively bashful because of her decision respecting Nala. Seeing this, a friend laughed out aloud and spoke to Nala like this: "O Nala! now your beloved is observing silence. Having spoken to you so much before, (she has) now (suddenly) chosen to be silent which amounts to a farce." Having heard such words of Damayanti's friends, King Nala, overwhelmed with joy, left in order to report to the gods, Indra, Agni, Yama, and Varuṇa on his mission. Painting 44 (43?)



PAINTING XLIV

After that, Damayantī eager to obtain Nala on the next day (in the *svayaṁvara*) passed that night with great difficulty. And Nala narrated to the gods Indra, Agni, Yama and Varuṇa as quickly as possible the gist of his mission in a joyless manner. Painting 44.

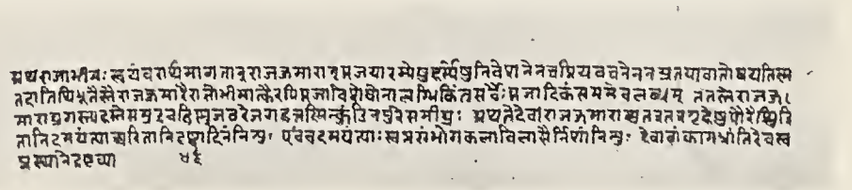


PAINTING XLV

Then the four quarters became all relieved by reason of the royal princes who were proficient in (the use of) arms and in sacred lore having left them together with their armies (to come to the *svayaṁvara*). (The sense is that they became joyous on account of being relieved of that burden). On account of the (concourse of) armies the royal roads became such that the grains of sesame thrown in the air could not fall on earth. In that assemblage of princes, he who was able to forge ahead thought that Damayantī was as good as his, feeling that by the time the others arrived, Damayantī would have chosen me for I had come ahead.

Because of this, the entire assemblage of princes vied with each other to get ahead of the others. Under these circumstances, some prince whose passage was blocked by those in front (and) who was being pushed hard by those behind, even having been reduced to the position of a *siddhārtha* (mustard seed in an oil press) believed himself not to be a *siddhārtha*(lit., one whose object is accomplished). Afar, the fluttering flags of the city of Kuṇḍinapura seemed to beckon with their tips those princes who were late on account of the road being crowded just as a person calls another who is lagging behind with (the movement of) hand etc. Now he (Śrīharṣa) gives the reason for some of the gods not having come to the *svayaṁvara*; How could the demons enter Kuṇḍinapura which had been protected by Vedic mantras chanted by the priests of Bhīma? This is why Nairṛita, guardian of the South-Western quarter, did not come. Again: How could the deer vanquished by the pair of Bhaīmi's (deer-like) eyes, come near her? For this reason, Vāyu, whose vehicle is a deer, too, did not come. It was not consideration of caste, which matters not to a maiden, but his ugliness which kept Kubera back. How could Gaurī who is half of the body of Śiva tolerate the marriage of Damayanti to equal Śiva's? Therefore, it is that Śiva too did not come, being only half the body. Śeṣa did not come as he could not find another god to whom he could leave the burden of the earth. And Brahmā, the lord of the upper quarter, having considered the essence of *dharma* , namely that a marriage with a grand-father (is incompatible), did not come.

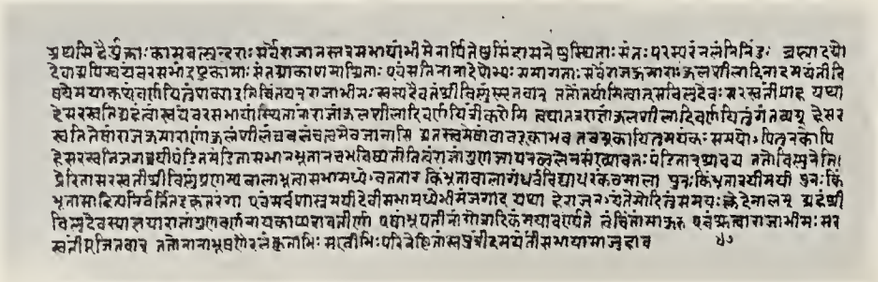
Indra, Agni, Yama and Varuṇa, however, still entertaining the hope that in the assembly of kings Damayantī might come and choose one of them, mistaking them for Nala, each assumed deceitfully the form of Nala. Then, each in Nala's form questioned the others, but looking in the mirror, and finding themselves as looking artificial, broke the mirrors (out of frustration). Then Vāsuki, too, being extolled by Karkoṭa and other serpents with words such as "be pleased", "may you live long", arrived there. Similarly, all the princes from other continents, too, smitten by Cupid, also arrived there. Painting 45.



PAINTING XLVI

Now, King Bhīma honoured the princes who had come for the *svayaṁvara* by according them every hospitality, by putting them up in attractive palaces, by endearing words, and with humility. No one among the guest princes received any special honours; everyone was given equal respect. Then that assemblage of princes was all accommodated in Kuṇḍinapura, as easily as the ocean was contained in Agastya's hand and the world in Viṣṇu's stomach. All those gods and princes passed the day by looking at the (virtuous) feats of Damayantī painted by citizens in many houses. Similarly, they passed the night by sexually enjoying

Damayantī in their dreams and having other pleasure. Here, in the case of the gods, only the 'illusion of sexual pleasure' should be understood. Painting 46.



PAINTING XLVII

Then, all the kings, handsome as Cupid and accompanied by the Siddhas, having occupied the seats in that assembly as offered by Bhīma, began to censure Nala together. The gods headed by Brahmā, too, desirous of seeing that assemblage for the *svayaṁvara*, stationed themselves in the sky. In that situation, King Bhīma, wondering how it will be possible for him to describe to Damayantī all the princes who had arrived there from different countries, detailing their lineage, character etc., remembered his personal deity, Śrī-Viṣṇu. Then Viṣṇu on account of his being the all-encompassing Supreme Being (and thus knowing the inner feelings of all), said to Sarasvatī as follows: "O Sarasvatī I appoint you as the announcer of the lineage and character of the kings who are seated in the assembly-hall of the *Svayaṁvara* . You should go there for this purpose; you alone know the lineage, character and valour of these princes. Therefore act as their spokesman. This is no time for you to keep mum. O Sarasvatī! there has not been, nor shall there (again) be, an assembly (like this) adorned by the learned men of the three worlds. Therefore, on the pretext of proclaiming the virtues of the kings, make the learned scholars listen (to your speeches)". Then Sarasvatī, thus urged by Viṣṇu, bowed to him and, transforming herself into a maiden, descended in the midst of that assembly. A maiden like that was a garland for the neck of Gandharvas and Vidyādharas, made up of the three Vedas, one the waves of whose glances were made of literature. Then that goddess, made of all the sacred lores, spoke to Bhīma in the midst of the assembly thus "O King! this is the time for you to be happy. Feel no distress. I am one who has descended here at the command of Śrī-Viṣṇu in order to describe the merits of the kings. I shall describe the lineage etc. of these kings; you need not worry." Having heard this, King Bhīma offered homage to Sarasvatī. Then, he summoned to the assembly his daughter, Damayantī, surrounded by her female-friends adorned with diverse ornaments. Painting 47.

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